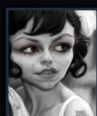


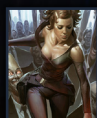
ARTIST

Concept Art, Digital & Matte Painting Magazine
Issue 046 October 2009



INTERVIEW

Jason Seiler



ARTICLES

Massive Black: Interview with Jason Manley
Sketchbook of Julia (Falina) Udalova



THE GALLERY

Hyung Jun Kim & Alex Broeckel,
plus more!

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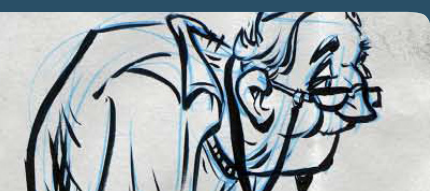
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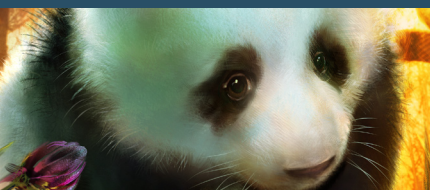
INTO THE FUTURE

SCI-FI CITY WITH CARLOS CABRERA



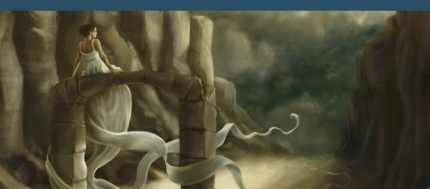
DYNAMIC AND EXAGGERATED POSES

Mark McDonnell teaches us a thing or two about dynamic and exaggerated poses for our character concepts in part four of our **Dynamic Characters** tutorial series



FUR AND SKIN EFFECTS CUSTOM BRUSHES

Kirsi Salonen shows us how to make customized fur and hair brushes, as well as taking us through the process of making some interesting skin brushes



BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO DIGITAL PAINTING

Nykolai Aleksander takes us through coloring from grayscale, blending methods, and incorporating photos into our paintings, in chapter four of the series

SCI-FI CITY ENVIRONMENT

Carlos Cabrera infuses his Google SketchUp scene with some 80's sci-fi movie nostalgia in the latest tutorial of our **Using 3D as a Base for 2D Painting** series



EDITORIAL

Welcome to **ISSUE 46** (just four stops away from the big 50!). Thanks to everyone who has stuck with us over the past few years, and a huge welcome to those who are just joining us – we hope you enjoy this and many issues to come. Thanks for your support; we can't do it without you!

OK, so we've got two really exciting interviews this month: we interview master of the caricature, **Jason Seiler**,

and it's been a long time coming but we are exceptionally pleased to have finally hooked ourselves an interview with none other than **Jason Manley**, for **Massive Black**. *Woo-hoo!* So check out the freakishly stunning portfolio of Jason Seiler on **P.6** and then join us on a journey with Jason Manley as we check out some of MB's latest concept art done for the entertainment and animation industries **P.30**. Big thanks to both Jasons for these really fantastic interviews; they've helped make this one hell of a special issue, and we hope you'll get plenty out of their words of wisdom, and magnificent art to boot!

Our cover image is by 2DArtist favorite, **Carlos Cabrera**, who is with us this month to show us how we can create a sci-fi masterpiece from just a couple of boxes and a simple robot design created in the easy-to-use freeware, Google SketchUp, before taking it into Photoshop for some color, texture, and detail work **P.52**. Inspired by old school sci-fi movies from the 80s, Carlos knocks up this speed painting in next to no time, giving us all the encouragement we need to dabble in the art of 3D paintovers to help speed up the painting process – and let's face it, in this industry time really is of the essence! It's not about cheating, it's about improving your workflow and getting great results, so set yourself a slot today to try it out and see what it can do for you!

We introduce **Mark McDonnell** to 2DArtist this month in our dynamic character tutorial series who talks to us on the topic of posing characters, and the importance of dynamic and exaggerated poses in character art. Mark has worked for studios including Walt Disney and Pixar, so if you want to find out how to enhance your character designs then now is your chance to check out some all-important advice from this industry professional **P.78**.

Our custom brushes take the direction of special effects for hair and skin this time around, with **Kirsi Salonen** teaching us how to use the Pen Tool in Photoshop for interesting effects over on **P.66**. Lots of free custom brushes for all our readers and some great tips and tricks on how to create your own – you'll have a massive library of custom-made brushes before you know it!

For those of you who are still fairly new to Photoshop and learning the way of it all, join **Nykolai Aleksander** in the fourth chapter of the six-part Beginner's Guide to Painting series. This month she shows us how to incorporate a photo into our painting, whilst taking a more in-depth approach to the whole painting process and discussing various blending methods. She has also very kindly supplied some great movie footage to accompany this tutorial, so get interactive on **P.88** and enjoy the movies with a cup of your favorite hot stuff!

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DYNAMIC CHARACTERS

Part 4 – Dynamic & Exaggerated Poses

DIGITAL PAINTING

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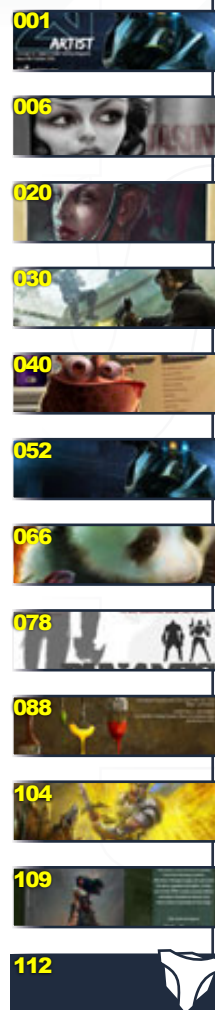
Project Overview by Oleg Matsokin

"WALKWAY"

Digital Art Masters: Volume 4 Free Chapter

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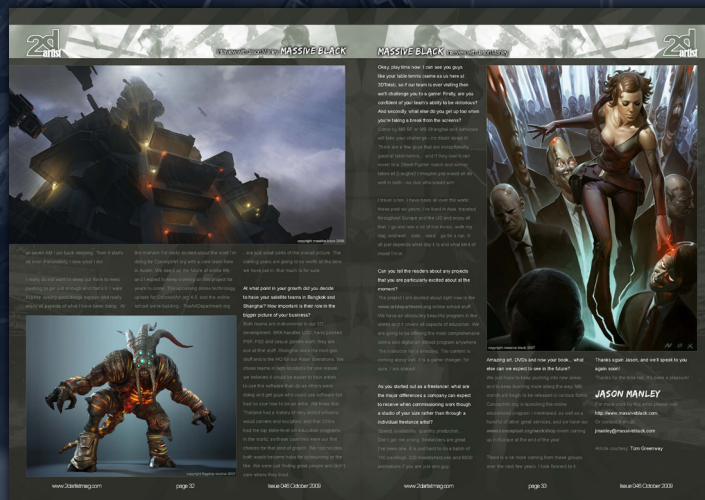
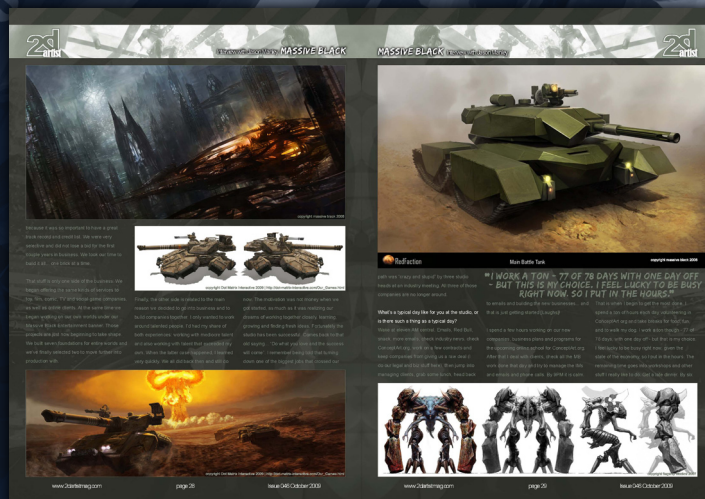
Our making of has kindly been written for this October issue by **Oleg Matsokin** on the creation of his image, *Imp Vs. Angel-Warrior*, an image based on the ever popular theme of good versus evil. Taking an alternative approach to the subject and breaking a few rules along the way, he takes us through the process from conception to final detailing over on **P.104**.

To wrap things up, please check out our Sketchbook feature with concept artist, **Julia (Falenor) Udalova**. And in the spirit of Halloween, we love **James Wolfe Strehle's** *The Twisted Room* gallery image; we're also honored to have work by Hyung Jun Kim and Alex Broeckel, and many others in this month's gallery on **P.40. ENJOY!**



Get the most out of your Magazine!

If you're having problems viewing the double-page spreads that we feature in this magazine, follow this handy little guide on how to set up your PDF reader!



SETTING UP YOUR PDF READER

For optimum viewing of the magazine it is recommended that you have the latest Acrobat Reader installed.

You can download it for free here: [DOWNLOAD!](#)

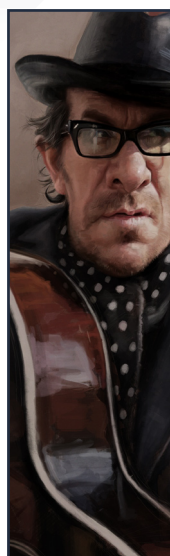
To view the many double-page spreads featured in 2D Artist magazine, you can set the reader to display 'two-up', which will show double-page spreads as one large landscape image:

1. Open the magazine in Reader;
2. Go to the **VIEW** menu, then **PAGE DISPLAY**;
3. Select **TWO-UP CONTINUOUS**, making sure that **SHOW COVER PAGE** is also selected.

CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS

Every month many artists around the world contribute to **3DCreative** and **2DArtist** magazines. Here you can find out more about them. If you would like to be a part of **3DCreative** or **2DArtist** magazine, please contact:

lynette@3dtotal.com



JASON SEILER

Has had the pleasure of painting for many magazines, such as TIME and MAD.

He's also worked on films for Universal Pictures, and more. He teaches a course on caricature illustration for Schoolism.com, and last year his first book came out, called "Caricature, the Art of Jason Seiler". His second book, "Seiler 2008-2009" will be available this July, as well as a two-hour instructional DVD, "Sketching with Jason Seiler".

www.jasonseiler.com | jseiler@jpusa.org

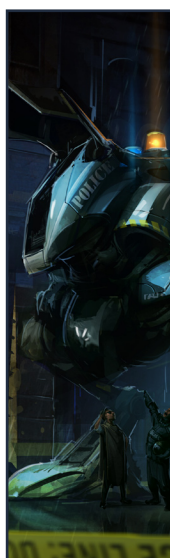
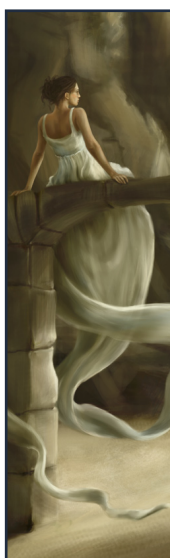


NYKOLAI ALEKSANDER

Born in Germany in 1978, she moved to England in 1999, and currently lives in South Africa with her husband. She's

been painting digitally since 2002, and works as a freelance illustrator for both private clients and companies.

www.admemento.com
x@admemento.com

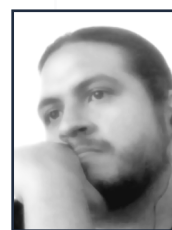


CARLOS CABRERA

Argentina-based digital artist, concept artist and illustrator.

He's has been doing concept art and character designs for videogame companies in Argentina and around the world for about six years, during which time he's launched a successful free video tutorial series, *Watch and Learn*, for the community. He's been doing art all his life, since a child, gathering a few good skills from his art direction and digital painting.

www.carloscabrera.com.ar
carloscabrera@gmail.com



Kirsi Salonen

An artist from Finland, who mostly laughs a lot, despite the dark artistic depictions in her work suggesting otherwise.

When she's not working, she's often smacking console games, listening to music, or watching good movies. Her motto in life is best described by the words of the great band, Placebo: "Eradicate the schism". She tells us that this phrase says just about everything she wants to accomplish as both an artist and a person.

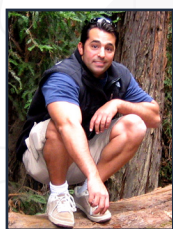
www.kirsisalonen.com | salonen.kirsi@gmail.com



WOULD YOU LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE TO 3DCREATIVE OR 2DARTIST MAGAZINE?

We are always looking for tutorial artists, gallery submissions, potential interviewees, "making of" writers, and more. For more information, please send examples of your work, or a link to your online portfolio, to:

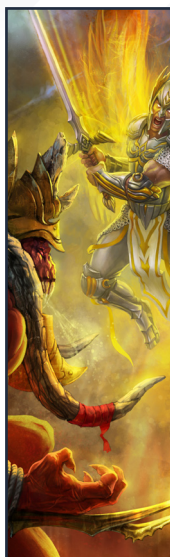
lynette@3dtotal.com



MARK MCDONNELL

A self-taught designer working in the animation and entertainment industry, specializing in a wide variety of skillsets such as character design, layout design, look development, graphic design, and as an instructor. He recently published *The Art and Feel of Making It Real: Gesture Drawing for the Animation and Entertainment Industry*, and he has worked for studios that include Walt Disney and Pixar, amongst many others.

www.cre8tivemarks.com | cre8tivemark@aol.com




OLEG MATSOKIN

A 31-year old concept artist residing in Moscow, Russia. He has been working in the games industry for over five years, currently working at Astrum Online Entertainment as a full-time lead artist where he is focused on concept art, illustration, and creating visual style solutions for games. He's keen on traditional drawing (paper, pastel, pencil, charcoal, crayon), as well as digital art, and he also enjoys traveling and looking at ordinary things from different angles.

www.matsokin.com | oleg@matsokin.com



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"WHAT I TRY TO
DO IS CAPTURE A
PERSON'S ESSENCE:
I TRY TO CAPTURE
THEIR CHARACTER. BY
EXAGGERATING AND
PUSHING ELEMENTS
OF TRUTH, I ENHANCE
BOTH THE SUBJECT'S
LIKENESS AND
ESSENCE"

JASON SEILER

From drawing caricatures of his grade school history teacher, to drawing caricatures for *The New York Times*, Jason Seiler's career has gone from strength to strength over the last couple of years. We recently caught up with him to discover more about the art of caricature, his fascination with ducks and who his dream caricature subject would be.

INTERVIEW WITH JASON SEILER

Hi Jason and welcome to the pages of 2DArtist! Now for a young guy, you have a seriously impressive resume; you've done work for Universal Pictures, *TIME* and *The New York Times*; you swept the board at the last ISCA (International Society of Caricature Artists) convention, winning too many awards for me to list here; you've had books and DVDs published ... but what I'd like to know is: how did it all begin? How did you take your first artistic steps to reach where you are today? And was your first commission really from your grade school principle [Laughs]?

My father is an artist as well, so I grew up surrounded by his drawings and paintings and was very young when I was first influenced by the idea of art. As a wildlife artist, he painted a lot of waterfowl for duck stamp competitions and because I probably thought I wanted to be an artist just like him, by the age of two I was drawing recognizable ducks with crayons and I knew their names as well. To this day I can still name almost any kind of duck I see! In fact, most of my younger days were spent filling my sketchbooks with birds, animals and the occasionally shark. Actually, I became obsessed with sharks at one point and drew over 350 different species in one book, listing their common and scientific names. My mom still has that book!

"SHE SAID I'D DONE A GREAT JOB AND TOLD ME THAT WHILE IT WASN'T A GOOD IDEA TO DRAW ON MY HOMEWORK I WAS VERY TALENTED."

When I was seven, I began to get into drawing cartoon characters, like Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck; I drew characters like this for years. Bugs Bunny turned into drawing the Ninja Turtles and from there I filled sketchbooks with Batman,



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Superman, and Spider-Man. Around the age of 10, I was introduced to *MAD* magazine. I rarely ever read it; I would mostly draw from it. Anything that looked fun to draw, I drew – mostly the work of Don Martin. As I continued to draw from *MAD*, I started playing around with people, making them look more like "Don Martin" people, with big noses and funny feet.

When I was 11 or 12, I started doing my first caricatures, although at the time I didn't know there was a name for what I was doing. My dad was a youth pastor at the time and so I was drawing all the kids in my youth group. I would spend hours and hours trying to capture their

likenesses from photographs that I'd taken. Soon after this I started drawing famous people; my first celeb caricature was of James Woods - my mom has that as well! My dad soon realized that I was obsessed with drawing caricatures and bought me Lenn Redman's book *How To Draw Caricatures*. It was at that moment that I realized what I had been doing wasn't something I'd just come up with, and that it even had a name!

My first commission for a "caricature" was indeed from my high school principle. I had a bad habit of always drawing on my homework and every once in a while I'd draw cartoons



and caricatures of my teachers on my work, not thinking that they would eventually see what I had drawn.

"I PAINT WHAT I WANT, HOW I WANT, I CHARGE WHAT I WANT, AND THERE'S NO DEADLINE"

One day in history class my teacher, Mr Wentz, saw a drawing that I had done of him. He took me to the Principle's office, the Principle excused him and when he left, she began to laugh. She said I'd done a great job and told me that while it wasn't a good idea to draw on my homework, I was very talented. She called me back into her office a day or so later and asked if I'd be interested in drawing nine teachers for a retirement party. I said sure and I was paid \$20 a person. It was then that I started to think that maybe I could draw caricatures for a living. And that's how all of this started.

It sounds like it was a pretty natural transition for you to move from caricature as a hobby to caricature as a potential career path. What was this transition like in reality? And just how difficult was it to turn that hobby into a sustainable career?

I had already been doing caricature and portraiture all the time, on my own time. As I slowly became known for what I was doing I would take on more and more "side jobs", drawing for commission whenever I could.

Eventually my "day job" was not only depressing for me to be at, but it was no longer needed. Everything changed after I did a small piece for *TIME* magazine. That job "officially" changed my career. Soon after I began working for magazines and haven't stopped since.

The difficulty for me in all of this was doing "gift caricatures" for people. I hated doing them because for me it wasn't "real" art, or at

least it didn't feel like it. I didn't want to draw people and their pets, or their request. People would want to be boxing Mike Tyson or flying an airplane. I realized soon that this sort of work was for a different kind of artist. I still take private commissions, but now I paint what I want, how I want, I charge what I want, and there's no deadline, I finish when I can. It works better because this way I draw and paint naturally and I create an original piece of art that the client is happy with.



The evidence of your talent for caricature is clear from looking at your portfolio and your websites. So I guess the natural next question is: why caricature? What is it about this area of art that captivates you so much? What key features are you looking for in the people you choose as subjects and how do you go about transforming someone into a caricature?

This is a good question. The funny thing is I don't consider myself a "caricaturist". I'm an artist and I have a passion for portraiture. My portraits are stylized; some exaggerated, some funny, and some not so funny, like my oil portrait of Saddam. I can draw and paint a straight portrait, but that's not as interesting to me. What I try to do is capture a person's essence; I try to capture their character. By exaggerating and pushing elements of truth, I enhance both the subject's likeness and essence. I feel that what I do is a lot like impressionism; when I look at a person, really what I'm painting is my impression of them. Sometimes it may look like a straight portrait – there's no need to exaggerate anything – other times it may be created out of exaggerated shapes and form.

When I look at a person, I don't look for any particular thing, or the "obvious" feature on their face. I study that person and find out



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what makes them unique. All the features on the face make a person unique and they're all connected. I look for shapes and I focus a lot of my energy on the subject's eyes and mouth. If it's a person I'm familiar with, I look for references of that person which are similar to what comes to mind when I picture that person in my head. When it's someone I don't know well I surround myself with lots of photos and I do a lot more sketching and prep work.

What do you think is the best caricature you've ever produced? And what kind of tricks and techniques do you use?

Man, that's a hard question! Honestly I don't know; I don't feel as though I have a favorite. I guess one of my favorite paintings is a recent

one I did of George Lucas. I don't know if it's my best caricature - I only like about a handful of the paintings I've done. The George Lucas is a 16"x20" acrylic on linen board. I enjoyed the time I spent while working on that painting and I have it framed and hanging in my studio. I'm not sure if I could ever sell it though because it has personal value to me; it won Studio Painting of the Year at the ISCA's 2008 convention and then was chosen to be in *Communication Arts Illustration Annual 50*. I enjoy the work I do digitally, but when I paint with acrylics or oil I feel somehow connected to the painting. It's then difficult for me to sell an original, no matter how much I may be getting for it.

"IT'S THE GREATEST COMPLIMENT WHEN SOMEONE HAS TO ASK WHAT MEDIUM A PAINTING WAS DONE IN."

I don't really feel as though I have any tricks. When I paint with acrylics or oils I usually paint on primed panel or linen board. I like to use a limited palette; usually my palette is Black, Cadmium Red, Yellow Ochre, and White. I'll sometimes add a bit of Ultramarine to my Black.

My palette when painting digitally is very similar. I try to not use too much color, or at least I start off that way and slowly build. I use the paintbrush tool and that's really about it. The important thing I do when painting digitally is to try and paint in a traditional way. I'll do an underpainting of sorts and intentionally let colors pop through from earlier on. Other than this, I don't feel I have any tricks; I'm not interested in abusing the computer or what it can do and I don't want my digital paintings to look digital. It's the greatest compliment when someone has to ask what medium a painting was done in. I was approached by many people at the ISCA convention who thought my George Lucas was a digital painting. I had brought the original with me for people to see and they were amazed that it had been created with "real" paint and "real" brushes.

Now I know you're involved in Imaginism Studios's "Schoolism" project. For those readers who might not be aware what Schoolism is all about, could you just give us a quick overview?

And what has been your experience of the service as a whole?

Schoolism was started by Bobby Chiu, an amazing artist and a good friend. It's a place to study if you're serious about becoming a better artist in your particular area of interest. All the instructors are well-known and established in their professions. If you want to learn about storyboarding, for example, you can learn directly from Kris Pearn who's been the head storyboard



artist on films like *Surf's Up* or *Open Season*. Or you can take Stephen Silver's class on character design. Stephen is one of the main character designers for Nickelodeon and many others. It's an amazing concept; you, as the student, get to learn from an artist who is an expert in his field!

"THE BEST PART ABOUT TEACHING AT SCHOOLISM IS WATCHING A STUDENT REALLY GROW AND IMPROVE AS AN ARTIST."

I currently teach a course on caricature, where I teach drawing and some painting, and cover exaggeration, likeness, humor, shape and capturing a person's essence. The way it works is like this: each semester I accept only 15 students and then for my class, there are nine lessons, each around two hours long. In those lessons there are demonstrations; I do several drawings and paintings, all the while breaking down my thought process and sharing my techniques. Each assignment then has homework that the student can download and which they have up to 10 days to complete. Once finished they upload it to the Schoolism



site, I download their work and begin my critiques. For my critiques, I work on a PC tablet and in this way I can draw and paint right onto the screen and record the whole thing. My critiques are usually 25-30 minutes long. The students then download a video file of me drawing and painting, sometimes over their work and sometimes starting from scratch to teach them how I would go about it. It's a one-on-one correspondence course.

Most of the painting I cover in this first course deals with values and the importance of understanding values. I'm currently working on a new course that will most likely start this coming fall. My new course will be "Painting

with Jason Seiler" and it will be an intense nine weeks. I'll mix traditional with digital and teach my approach to painting.

So far the experience has been really great. The best part about teaching at Schoolism is watching a student really grow and improve as an artist. I take on every level of talent. I've had students who were already quite good and others who could barely draw. I take each student on personally and if I have to make adjustments in order for them to learn and grow, I do. I'll sometimes change the course a bit for a particular student; it becomes personal this way. If the student works hard and pushes themselves, they will hopefully come out of





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my course with a publishable piece of art, or if not then they will certainly have a new understanding of what it will take for them to be able to do that.

Wow that sounds intense! Do you have any advice for potential students thinking of taking one of your courses? Is there anything they can do in preparation to make sure they get the very best out of their chosen course?

Sure, my advice would be to do more than what I ask. If I assign two to three sketches of a person, do ten sketches. Always do more, push yourself to the limit as much as you can. Really, if a person does the work and more and

communicates with me and shares their process - if they can be honest with themselves - they will improve and complete the course a much stronger artist. I've had many students who were good, but now after taking the course they're really good and I couldn't be more proud.

It's why I continue to teach. It's always good to humble yourself, become "teachable". I've had some students who were talented, and knew they were, and because of this they thought they had nothing to learn and therefore didn't grow or improve at all. Other students, who may not have been quite so good, passed them towards the end.

In your blog you mention that you're currently working on a sketching DVD. I imagine that's quite a full-on process; just how do you go about making a DVD? Were you commissioned to produce it, or is it a personal pursuit?

The DVD is called *Sketching with Jason Seiler*. It's not an instructional DVD on how to draw caricatures - although I do draw a lot of caricatures or portraits - it's more of an inspirational DVD where I share my drawing and sketching techniques. The DVD will cover shape and form, cross hatching, thumbnails and their importance, digital painting and digital paint sketching, ball point pen sketching, watercolor, and much, much more. I share a bit about



caricature and my thought process; I draw several people while talking the whole time... but like I said, it's not intended to be a caricature instructional DVD. I feel it will relate to many artists in many different areas of drawing, from comics to portraiture.

Creating the DVD was a huge deal. It was a lot of work and I did all of it on my own. I've gotten many requests over the years to do a DVD and I felt that a DVD on sketching would be the best thing to start with because as I think it's important to establish a strong foundation by nailing sketching and drawing before you get too far into painting.

The DVD is high quality and two hours long, with a bonus video of me flipping through some of my sketchbooks, as well as a painting gallery and a sketchbook gallery. My friend Nathan makes music videos for bands and we worked on the DVD for about three months, filming hundreds of hours of drawing and painting. We then spent about two and a half weeks editing it all together. Because I used to be in a number of bands and know a lot of musicians, I was also able to get professional musician friends of mine to write music for the DVD.

The DVD looks and sounds really good and I'm very proud of how it turned out. Most instructional videos that I've seen are cheesy, have bad music and the film quality isn't all that great either. I told Nathan right off the bat what



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kind of DVD I wanted to make and I'm happy to say that we achieved it, with a really top-notch look and great sound. The only thing that I'm not happy with is my own voice ... I can't stand the sound of it!

When can we expect this DVD to be released? And do you see anymore DVDs in your future, or has all the hard work put you off [Laughs]?

The DVD and my new book have both been released and they're both selling quite well! The most exciting thing for me is that I'm selling quite well internationally. It's great sending my work to Iran and Egypt one moment and then to Japan or Belgium the next. I do plan on making more DVDs and books in the future and I think my next DVD will probably be on painting. I'm also working on another project that will be quite different, more of a short film in book form. I'm very excited about it.

My DVD and book can be found by going to my store on my website, or by going directly to: www.jasonseilerdepot.blogspot.com

One final question before you go: if you could produce a caricature of anyone in the world, to hang on their wall for all to see, who would it be of, and why?

I don't know ... this is a hard one. I think maybe Conan O'Brian; I think he's hilarious, he'd be fun to paint and it would be cool to know he enjoys a painting that I did of him.



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JASON SEILER

For more work by this artist please visit:

<http://www.jasonseiler.com/>

<http://www.levycreative.com/portfolio.php?pid=192>

<http://www.imaginismstudios.com/our-art/jason-seiler>

<http://www.jasonseilerillustration.blogspot.com/>

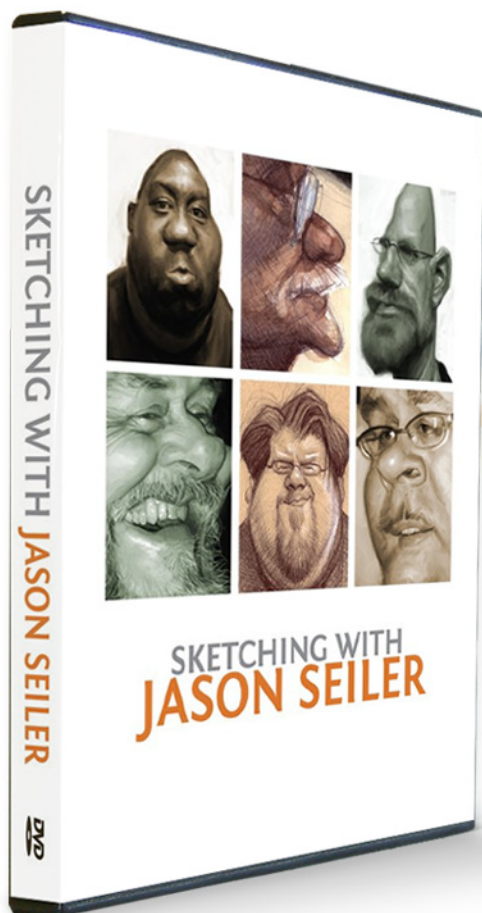
<http://www.schoolism.com/>

Or contact them at:

jseiler@jpusa.org

Interviewed by: Jo Hargreaves





SKETCHING WITH JASON SEILER

"Covering a wide field of media including digital paint, watercolor and even ballpoint pen (!), Seiler's two-hour incursion into technique is not only impressive but enlightening. Watching work go from loose affiliations of lines through to finished artwork is a real benefit to those wishing to expand their range and learn not only the basics of caricature but the use of other media.

"Seiler speaks with the viewer constantly but doesn't waste screen time on his own head shots and being yer best friend, instead letting the camera cover the work as it emerges. Long shots of faces emerging from the canvas don't bore the viewer as every line slowly builds the work (though the creation is shown in double speed). For anyone interested in learning the techniques of caricature painting in Photoshop, this is not necessarily a tutorial, but rather just a dynamic example of how Seiler does things in his own method. His tips for capturing likeness are generally the common basics but there are still some good ideas for both the amateur and the professional alike.

"In terms of Special Features, there's a bit of stuff to wade through, though these are mostly galleries of both Seiler's finished works and sketchbooks. There is some occasional repeat viewing here, but also a few surprising (excellent) sketches thrown in of images that aren't caricatures.

"There is a link on the main menu to take you to particular lessons documented throughout the major piece of the DVD, which will save those wishing to use it for reference trawling through the entire disc.

"Overall, for someone learning caricature or wanting to improve their game, this is well worth a visit. The links to lessons throughout the disc make it an easy reference point for particular media or techniques." – DVD Review by Jules Faber for Inkspot

Where to Buy!

To purchase the Sketching with Jason Seiler DVD, please visit:
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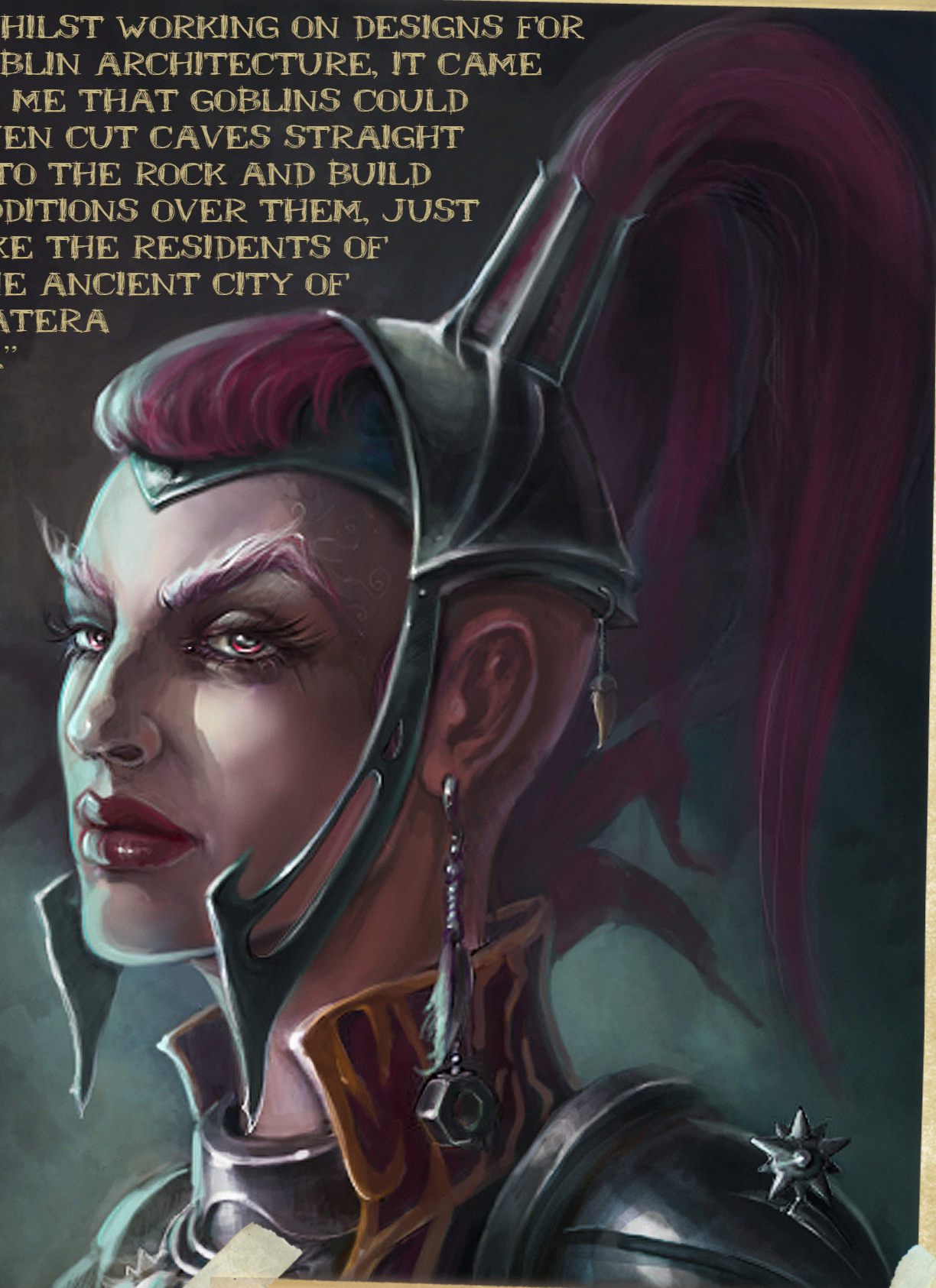
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"WHILST WORKING ON DESIGNS FOR GOBLIN ARCHITECTURE, IT CAME TO ME THAT GOBLINS COULD EVEN CUT CAVES STRAIGHT INTO THE ROCK AND BUILD ADDITIONS OVER THEM, JUST LIKE THE RESIDENTS OF THE ANCIENT CITY OF MATERA DO."



SKETCHBOOK OF JULIA UDALOVA

Julia Udalova, otherwise known as Falinor, is with us this month to take us through some of her recent sketchbook additions, covering cute designs for children's games, a clumsily-built goblin city, and mysterious female heroines. Sit back, and enjoy!

SKETCHBOOK OF JULIA (FALINOR) UDALOVA

Hi, I'm Julia (Falinor) Udalova, I currently work as a lead concept artist designing characters, locations and objects, and this is my sketchbook!

Drawing characters, backgrounds, interface elements, smilies, icons, and even comics are within the scope of my activities in my role as concept artist. At present, I'm working on an on-line project for children, where all the characters and animated objects are vectorized – creating vector characters is also one of my many jobs.

When designing a character for a game I find that you should always consider not only the age of your audience, the genre and the type of game, but you should also keep in mind how the character will be animated, and its movements. So to start things off I'd like to first of all tell you about some sketches and characters I've designed recently for a children's game.



CHILDREN'S CHARACTERS

Let's consider then an on-line project for preschool kids and their parents. For the children, I had to design characters – an avatar for the player (a boy or girl) and several "quest" animals. I initially designed the girls as shown in Fig.01, but they were too cheeky and grown-up looking for small children, and therefore the kids using the website wouldn't have been able to connect with them.

So I went through a number of children's images to do some research and came to the conclusion that I should keep the style of character and the "fidgetiness" of them, but simply change the age range of them to something much younger, and more in keeping with the children who were going to be using them.



Fig.01

When working on a character I quickly design details, components, combine ideas, and sometimes complete some of the designs if I feel they're working. With this particular project, in the end I had many different types of

children, but I realized that the more fantasy or doll-like characters just didn't fit with the brief. So I decided to run with the cute baby-faced designs, as marked with a tick in Fig.02.

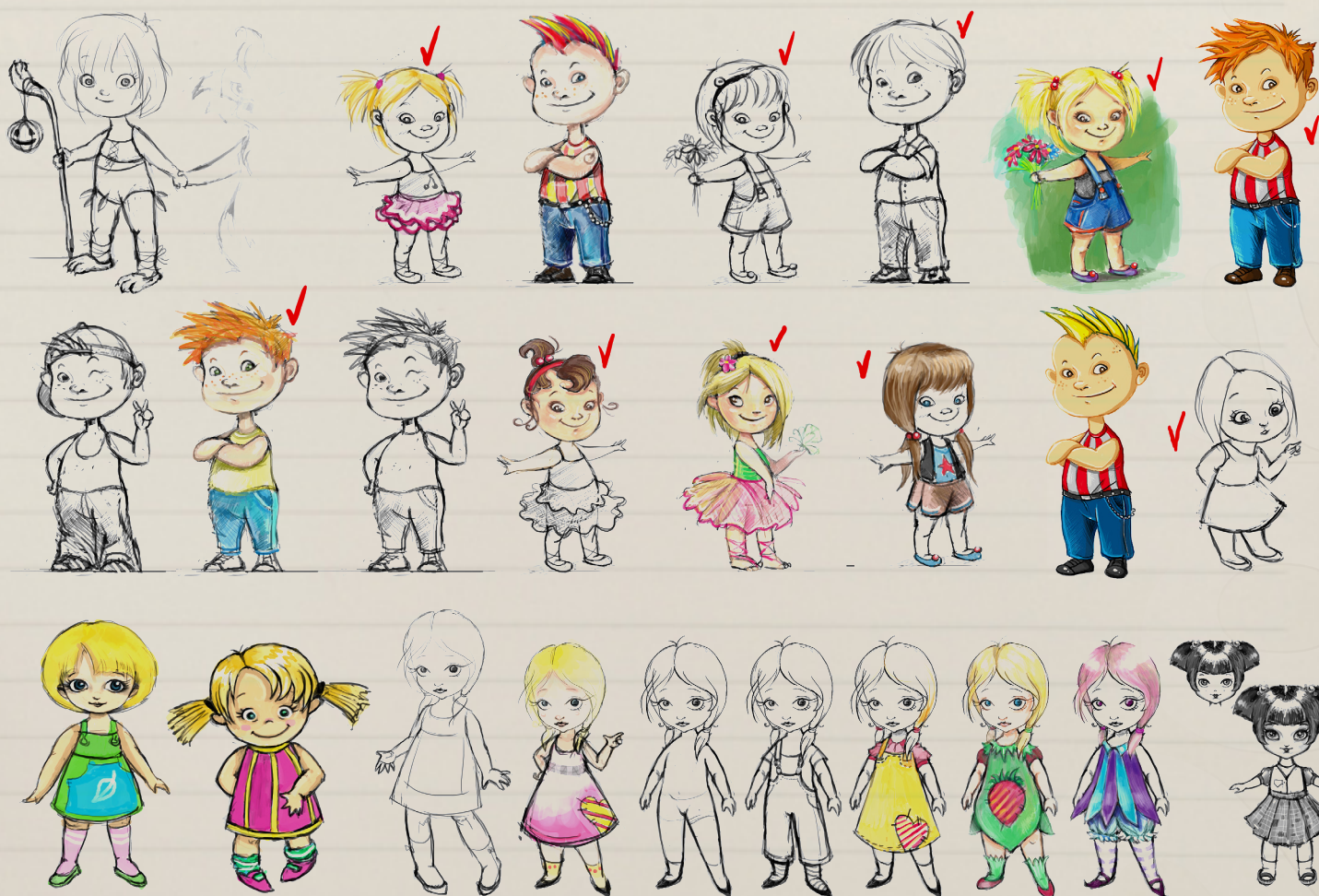
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Fig.02



Fig.03

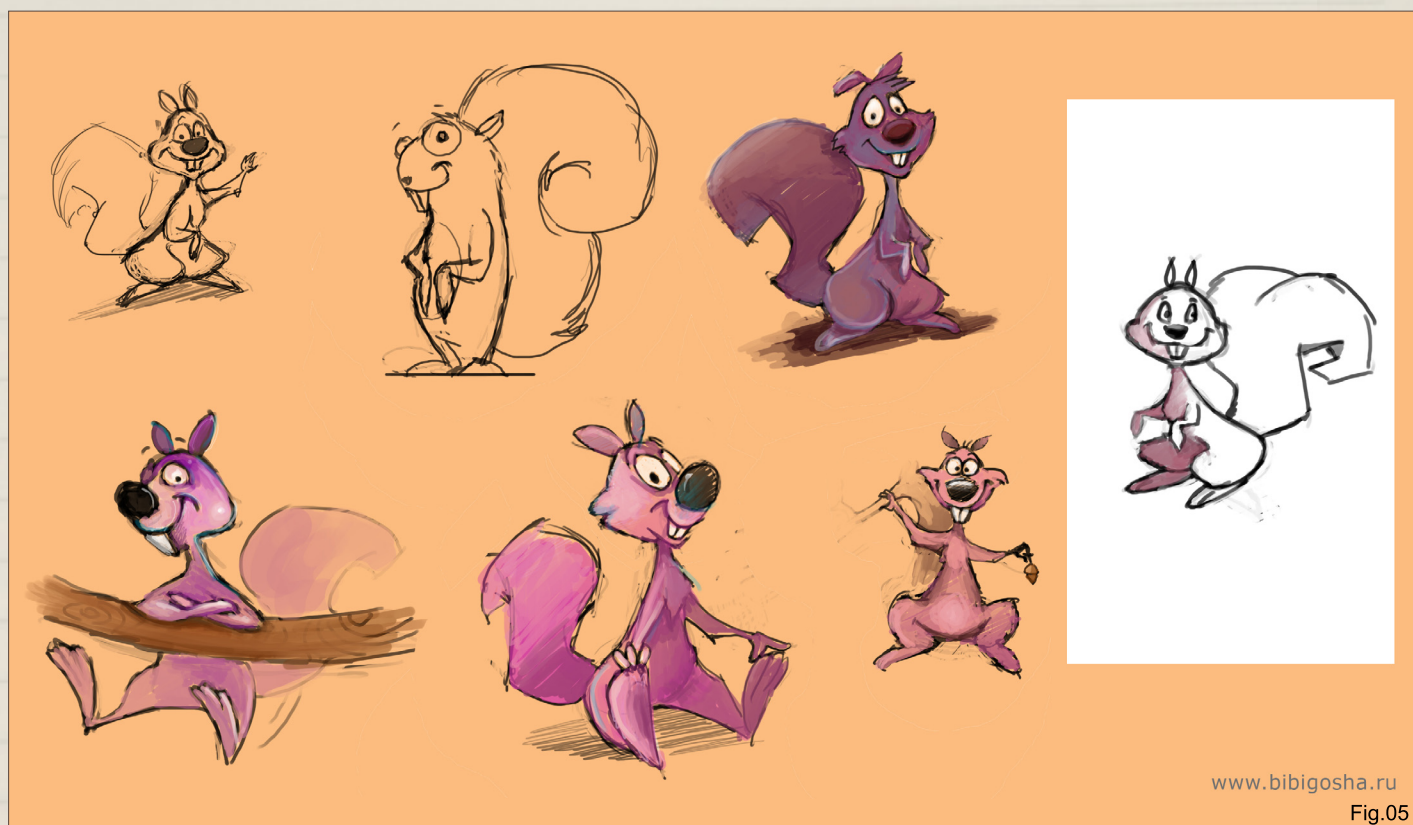
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Images of small animals for a magic world can come from anywhere – a dream, folk tales; they could be inspired by watching a cartoon ... One thing these animals needed though, for this particular project, were real animal features, to make it easier for the young players to dive into an unfamiliar world. I had to be sure not to forget about the age of the animals, too; they also needed to look young in character, because the game was for small children, after all. I also went ahead and designed some housing for the creatures, for different climates (Fig.03).

You'd think that a raven design would be easy, but actually there are lots of different ravens and I had to find one that worked. The first version in Fig.04 looks like a pelican; the second like a young jackdaw. So I continued searching for the right design, playing with proportions and characteristics, and eventually my raven turned into more of a sly and cagey character, which is very much in keeping with the real thing!



Fig.04

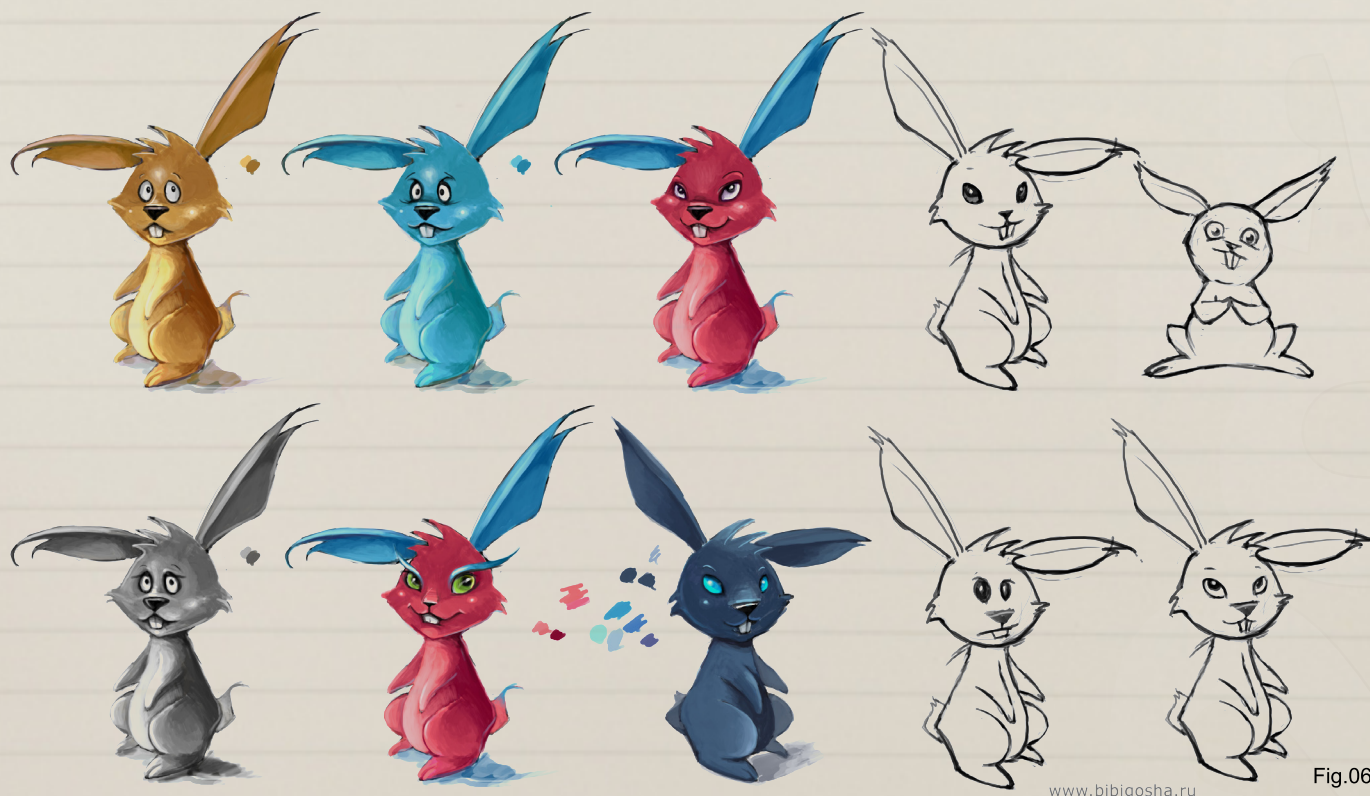


Likewise, a squirrel is a cheeky nut beggar. In a magical world for small children, a squirrel could even be purple! The main thing I had to keep in mind with this one was that the basic appearance and characteristics remained recognizable as squirrel-like, even though I was

changing the natural color to something more fantastical (**Fig.05**).

A rabbit is a cowardly and slightly silly character. After designing ten rabbits, I chose to run with a brown one. He has a discouraging

expression and a face that completely corresponds to a quest which he gives to the player. The others are too aggressive or have acidic colors — a child might be frightened of such a mutant! (**Fig.06**)



I don't just draw for children, though, so let's now take a look at some sketches I've created for goblin architecture to move this article onwards!

GOBLINS

Goblins are stupid creatures. Their architecture is primitive and also slightly ridiculous. They use materials at hand, but they're badly treated and clumsy looking. Goblins don't care about beauty – only convenience matters (Fig.07 – 09).



Fig.08



Fig.07



Fig.09



Fig.10

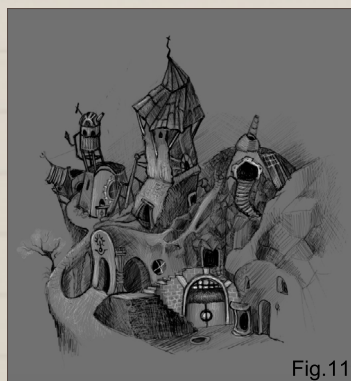


Fig.11

A goblin building could be constructed on a rock, to make it easier to defend. The mine, tavern, blacksmith could be settled in the same location – or perhaps even in rocky caves that form a small town that way (Fig.10).

Whilst working on designs for goblin architecture, it came to me that goblins could even cut caves straight into the rock and build additions over them, just like the residents of the ancient city of Matera do (Fig.11).

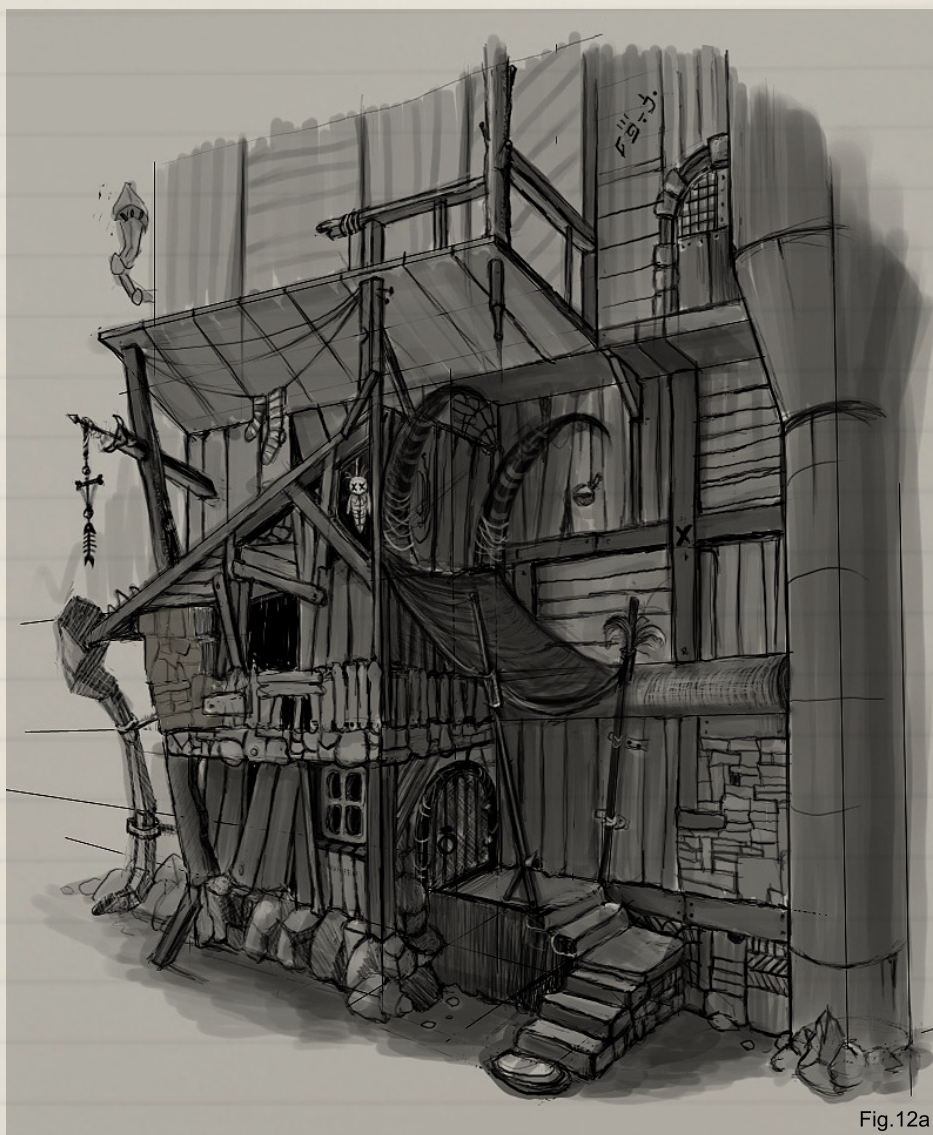


Fig.12a

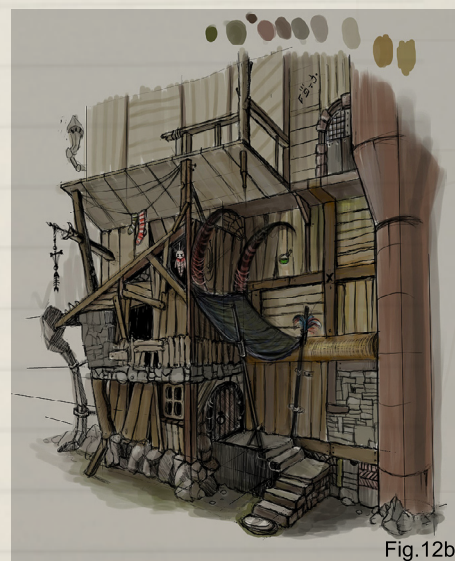


Fig.12b



Fig.12c

Or they could build structures of stone, with logs and planks, constructing massive buildings that look like boxes with lots of useless elements to them (Fig.12a-12c).

And so, from various initial ideas I started work on the sketch for a goblin town. At first it was just a spot with a pair of houses and a bridge. Then the spot turned into a rock and useful buildings began to appear. As a result, there appeared a blacksmith, a tower, a monastery, a shaft, and other necessary buildings (Fig.13 – 14).

Goblins are such funny, foolish beings – and huge fans of beer and toys (Fig.15)!

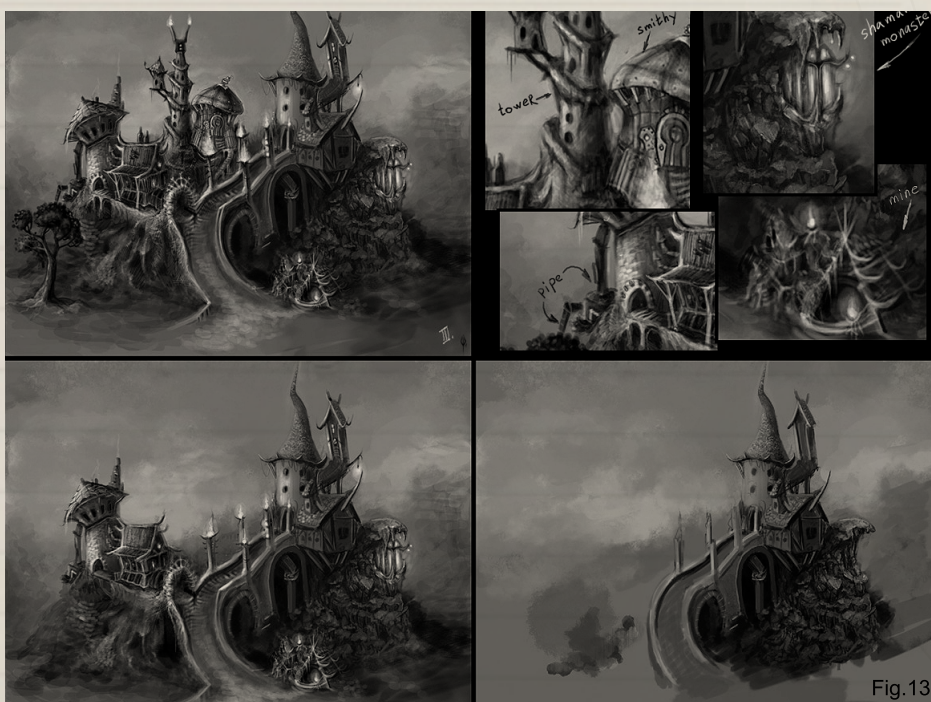


Fig.13



Fig.14



Fig.15

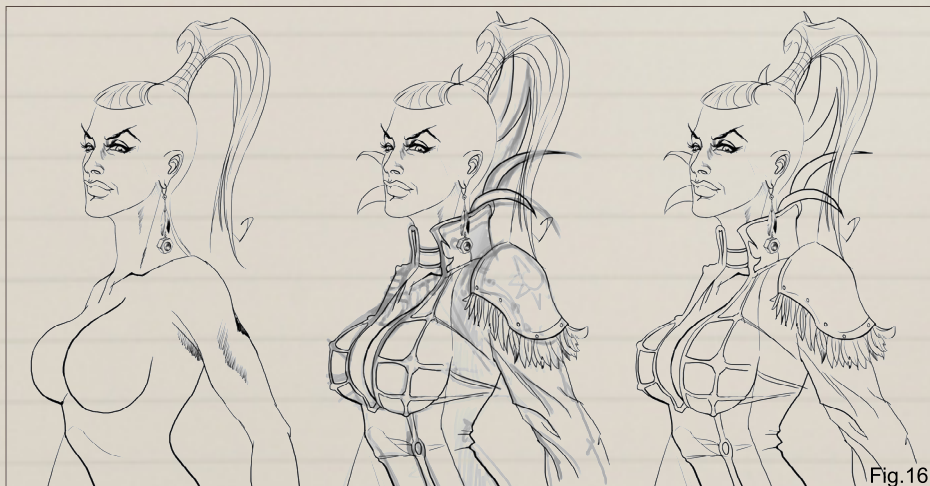


Fig.16

FEMALE CHARACTERS

Even a villain can be sexual: positive, brutal...

A female character will look cooler if, to her beauty and brutality, you add a zest that makes her different from other heroines. For example, it could be a firm gaze, good posture, or deliberately negligence – it's all in your hands!

General Ainia, who I painted for the Dominance War competition, looks tired and a little cold hearted (Fig.16 – 17). War is her work, and the portrait reflects that in her character – she's a militant woman, in armor, with a firm gaze and a determined posture.

A heroine could even be airy, just like this fairy (Fig.18). The main thing is that the character has unique features which stand her apart from others. Don't you think that a heroine with character and history is far more interesting than just another empty beautiful picture...?

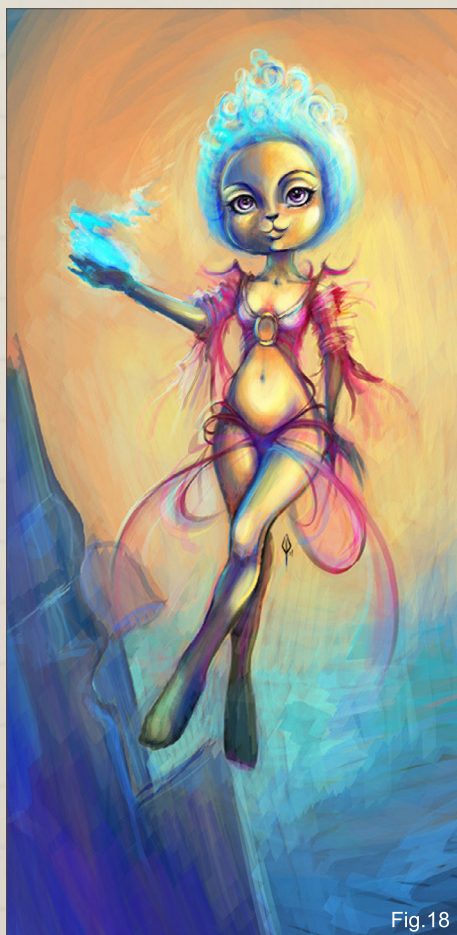


Fig.18



GENERAL AINIA

Fig.17

Well, that's about it from me, I hope this insight into my sketchbook has been interesting, and I wish you every success with your own concepts. Thanks for reading!

JULIA (FALINOR) UDALOVA

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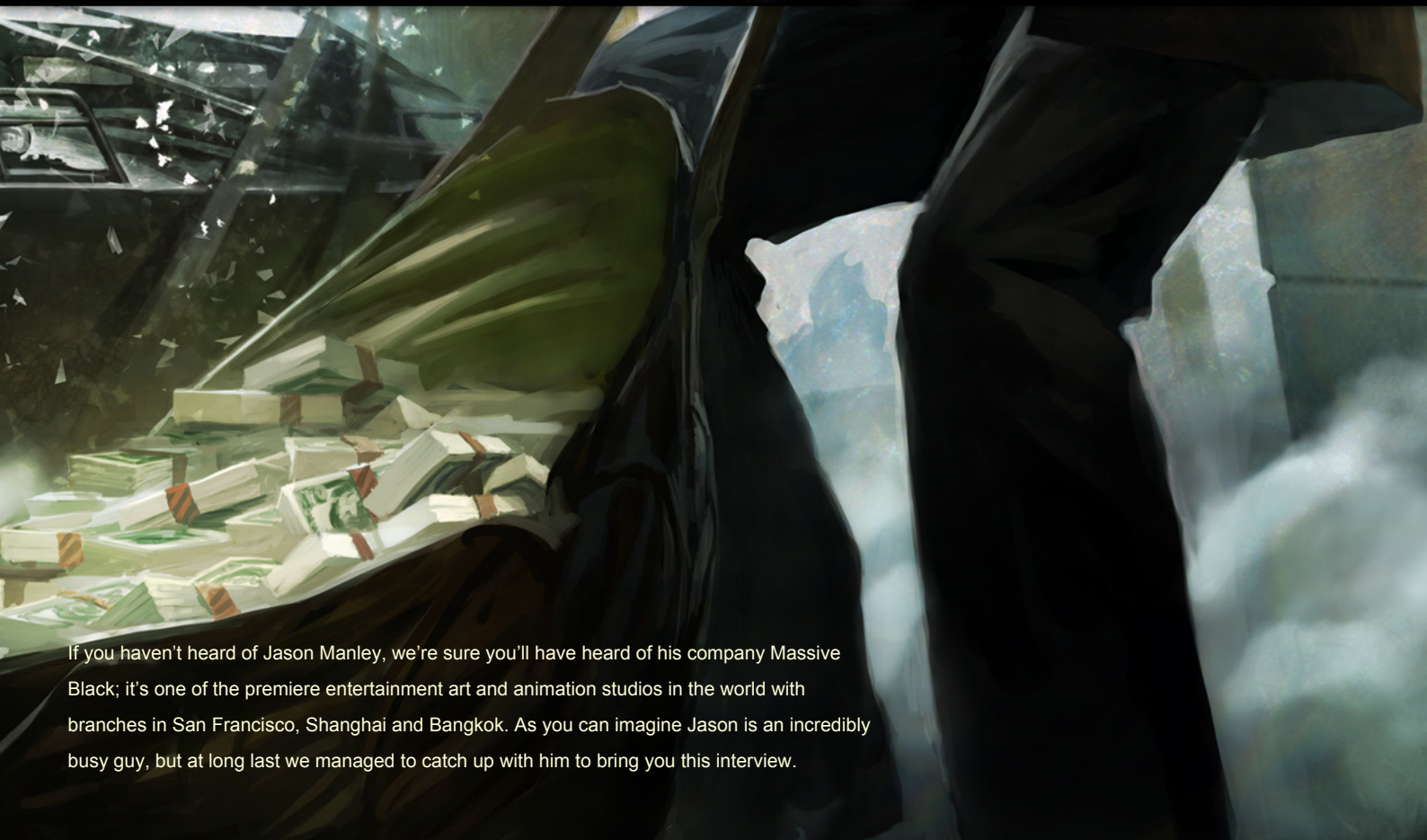
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MASSIVE BLACK



If you haven't heard of Jason Manley, we're sure you'll have heard of his company Massive Black; it's one of the premiere entertainment art and animation studios in the world with branches in San Francisco, Shanghai and Bangkok. As you can imagine Jason is an incredibly busy guy, but at long last we managed to catch up with him to bring you this interview.

MASSIVE BLACK

Hi Jason, great of you to take time out of your busy schedule to chat with us! Can you start off by telling us about the idea behind Massive Black; was there one single moment that triggered it all off? And did it snowball very quickly after that?

Massive Black got going in late 2002, about eight months after I first set up ConceptArt.org. In the past I had tried to get high quality art done outside of the companies I worked with and every time I used an outside group, the art that came back was terrible. It was missing quality, heart, and soul. There was no place to get good stuff except for from individual artists working freelance. The industry was not outsourcing much work at the time, peanuts really. I recognized that the industry would have to start working that way due to growing team sizes, and I had gotten so busy with freelance work that I had to start farming it out to friends just to get it all done. That work is what built our remote pipelines, some of which we still use today. We made the decision then to be the first concept art studio for the games industry. Within weeks we had attracted some big name 3D artists and animators and that rounded out the company and widened our capabilities. We were going to be the first full service art outsourcing studio



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"WE WANTED TO WORK WITH THE TOP CLIENTS IN THE FIELD AND WE ONLY WANTED TO WORK WITH TOP TALENT AT THE STUDIOS - PLUS WE WANTED TO WORK ON ALL THE BEST PROJECTS."

doing next-gen work in the industry, as well as the first to truly offer all the art work that games or entertainment needed, under one company banner. Jobs rolled in fairly quickly.

We really focused on games since Andrew, Coro and I were the first three partners, and games were in our blood. We saw the industry heading toward outsourcing and external co-development. We knew if we could get great

people together we would be seen as the only group who did a great job... at least that was the hope! At the time the work clients outsourced elsewhere came back to them ruined or sub-par in almost all occasions.

No western publishers had that set up, so we decided to go after it. Concept Art was all done in-house at the games studios, except for some occasional freelance stuff like Bungie did with Mullins or the like. Really it seemed like a smart biz move to offer team-based, high quality, art and assets. We spent two years setting up the first solid pipelines with the publishers and then watched as 300 other companies sprung up to compete with us [Laughs]! We fought hard though and managed to land more clients than most of our top ten competitors combined. It is not easy work, but it is what we set out to build.

Yeah, it moved quickly. We were the only ones doing it, so we got a great jump from the beginning. We wanted to work with the top clients in the field and we only wanted to work with top talent at the studios - plus we wanted to work on all the best projects. Over the years I have turned down quite a few projects, just



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because it was so important to have a great track record and credit list. We were very selective and did not lose a bid for the first couple years in business. We took our time to build it all... one brick at a time.

That stuff is only one side of the business. We began offering the same kinds of services to toy, film, comic, TV and social game companies, as well as online clients. At the same time we began working on our own worlds under our Massive Black Entertainment banner. Those projects are just now beginning to take shape. We built seven foundations for entire worlds and we've finally selected two to move further into production with.

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Finally, the other side is related to the main reason we decided to go into business and to build companies together. I only wanted to work around talented people. I'd had my share of both experiences: working with mediocre talent and also working with talent that exceeded my own. When the latter case happened, I learned very quickly. We all did back then and still do

now. The motivation was not money when we got started, as much as it was realizing our dreams of working together closely, learning, growing and finding fresh ideas. Fortunately the studio has been successful. Comes back to that old saying... "Do what you love and the success will come". I remember being told that turning down one of the biggest jobs that crossed our

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Main Battle Tank

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path was "crazy and stupid" by three studio heads at an industry meeting. All three of those companies are no longer around.

What's a typical day like for you at the studio, or is there such a thing as a typical day?

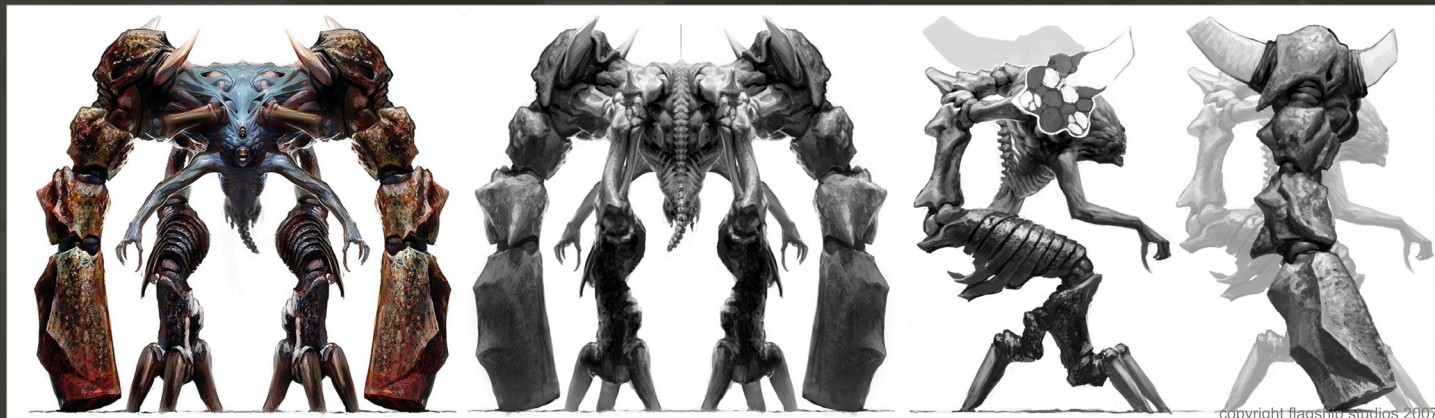
Wake at eleven AM central. Emails, Red Bull, snack, more emails, check industry news, check ConceptArt.org, work on a few contracts and keep companies from giving us a raw deal (I do our legal and biz stuff here), then jump into managing clients, grab some lunch, head back

"I WORK A TON - 77 OF 78 DAYS WITH ONE DAY OFF - BUT THIS IS MY CHOICE. I FEEL LUCKY TO BE BUSY RIGHT NOW, SO I PUT IN THE HOURS."

to emails and building the new businesses... and that is just getting started [Laughs]!

I spend a few hours working on our new companies, business plans and programs for the upcoming online school for ConceptArt.org. After that I deal with clients, check all the MB work done that day and try to manage the IMs and emails and phone calls. By 9PM it is calm.

That is when I begin to get the most done. I spend a ton of hours each day volunteering in ConceptArt.org and take breaks for food, fun, and to walk my dog. I work a ton though - 77 of 78 days, with one day off - but that is my choice. I feel lucky to be busy right now, given the state of the economy, so I put in the hours. The remaining time goes into workshops and other stuff I really like to do. Get a late dinner. By six



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or seven AM I am back sleeping. Then it starts all over. Fortunately, I love what I do!

I really do not want to sleep but have to keep pushing to get just enough and that's it. I want to keep seeing good things happen and really enjoy all aspects of what I have been doing. At

the moment I'm really excited about the work I'm doing for ConceptArt.org with a core team here in Austin. We see it as the future of online life and I expect to keep working on this project for years to come. The upcoming online technology update for ConceptArt.org 4.0, and the online school we're building - TheArtDepartment.org

- are just small parts of the overall picture. The coming years are going to be worth all the time we have put in, that much is for sure.

At what point in your growth did you decide to have your satellite teams in Bangkok and Shanghai? How important is their role in the bigger picture of your business?

Both teams are instrumental in our 3D development. BKK handles LOD, hand painted, PSP, PS2 and casual games work; they are ace at that stuff. Shanghai does the next-gen stuff and is the HQ for our Asian operations. We chose teams in both locations for one reason: we believed it would be easier to train artists to use the software than do as others were doing and get guys who could use software but had no clue how to be an artist. We knew that Thailand had a history of very skilled artisans, wood carvers and sculptors, and that China had the top state-level art education programs in the world, so these countries were our first choices for that kind of growth. We had no idea both would become hubs for outsourcing or the like. We were just finding great people and didn't care where they lived.



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Okay, play time now: I can see you guys like your table tennis (same as us here at 3DTotal), so if our team is ever visiting then we'll challenge you to a game! Firstly, are you confident of your team's ability to be victorious? And secondly, what else do you get up too when you're taking a break from the screens?

Come by MB SF or MB Shanghai and someone will take your challenge - no doubt about it! There are a few guys that are exceptionally good at table tennis... and if they lose it can revert to a *Street Fighter* match and winner takes all [Laughs]! I imagine you would all do well in both - no clue who would win!

I travel a ton. I have been all over the world these past six years; I've lived in Asia, traveled throughout Europe and the US and enjoy all that. I go and see a lot of live music, walk my dog, and well... date... read... go for a run. It all just depends what day it is and what kind of mood I'm in.

Can you tell the readers about any projects that you are particularly excited about at the moment?

The project I am excited about right now is the www.artdepartment.org online school stuff. We have an absolutely beautiful program in the works and it covers all aspects of education. We are going to be offering the most comprehensive online and digital art school program anywhere. The instructor list is amazing. The content is coming along well. It is a game changer, for sure. I am stoked!

As you started out as a freelancer, what are the major differences a company can expect to receive when commissioning work through a studio of your size rather than through an individual freelance artist?

Speed, availability, quantity production...

Don't get me wrong; freelancers are great. I've been one. It is just hard to do a batch of 150 paintings, 300 models/textures and 6000 animations if you are just one guy.



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Amazing art, DVDs and now your book... what else can we expect to see in the future?

We just hope to keep pushing into new areas and to keep learning more along the way. MB worlds will begin to be released in various forms. ConceptArt.org is launching the online educational program I mentioned, as well as a handful of other great services, and we have our www.conceptart.org/workshop event coming up in Europe at the end of the year.

There is a lot more coming from these groups over the next few years. I look forward to it.

Thanks again Jason, and we'll speak to you again soon!

Thanks for the time too. It's been a pleasure!

JASON MANLEY

For more work by this artist please visit:

<http://www.massiveblack.com>

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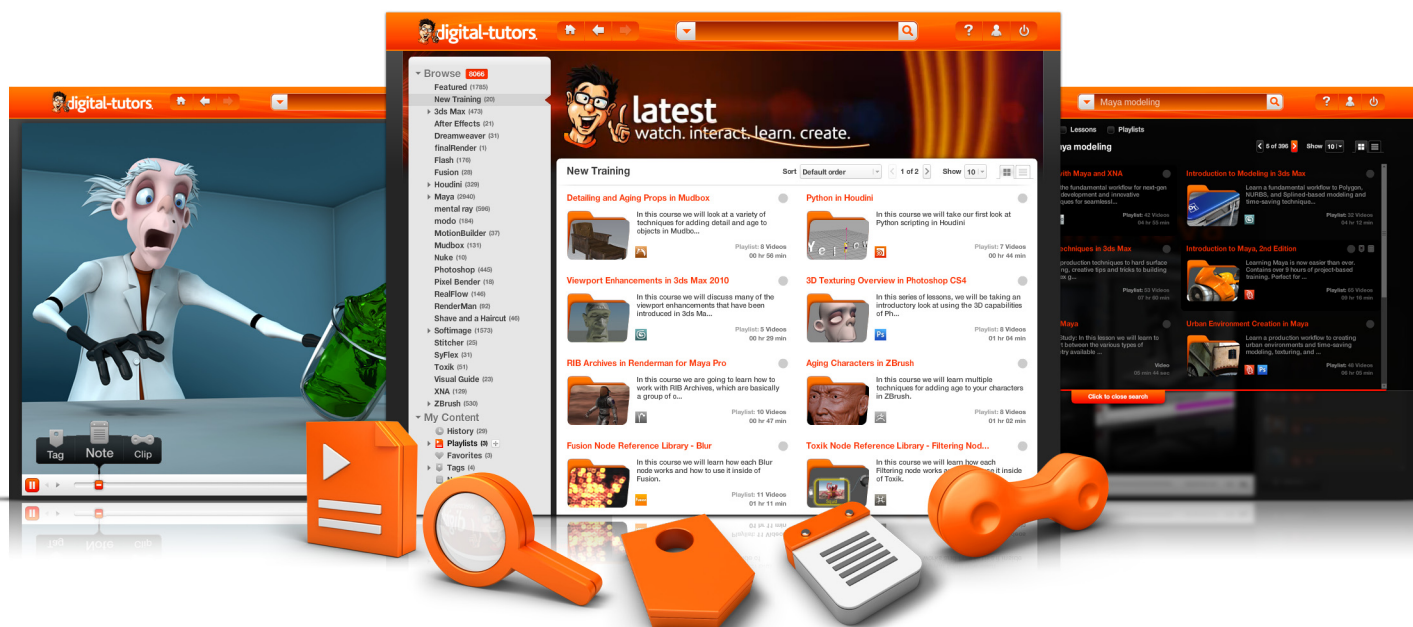
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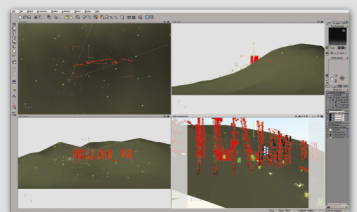
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Matt Ellis
Kenichiro Tomiyasu
Kian Kiani
Sasha Podgorny
James Wolf Strehle
Alex Broeckel

FOGGY EVENING

Lubos de Gerardo Surzin

<http://www.degerardo.com>

gerardo_de@yahoo.co.uk

(Right)



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WELCOME HOME

Alex Broeckel

<http://www.alexbroeckel.com>

alexbroeckel@gmail.com

(Below)



INDIAN TEA

Sasha Podgorny

<http://gorec.by>

sashagorec@gmail.com

(Right)



THE TWISTED ROOM

James Wolf Strehle

<http://jamiestrehle.com/>

jameswolfstrehle@yahoo.com

(Left)

LOTUS AND GIRL

Mingjuan Zhong

clown.cg@hotmail.com





SHORT BREAK

Hyung Jun Kim

<http://kjun.org/>

kjunorg@gmail.com

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KIM HYUNG JUN





EASTERN DRAGON RIDER

Ghassem Farhany

<http://www.no1hellangle.deviantart.com>

gh_farhany_cg@yahoo.com

(Above)

STACKED CITY

Matt Ellis

<http://www.mattpainting.com>

matellis17@gmail.com

(Below)





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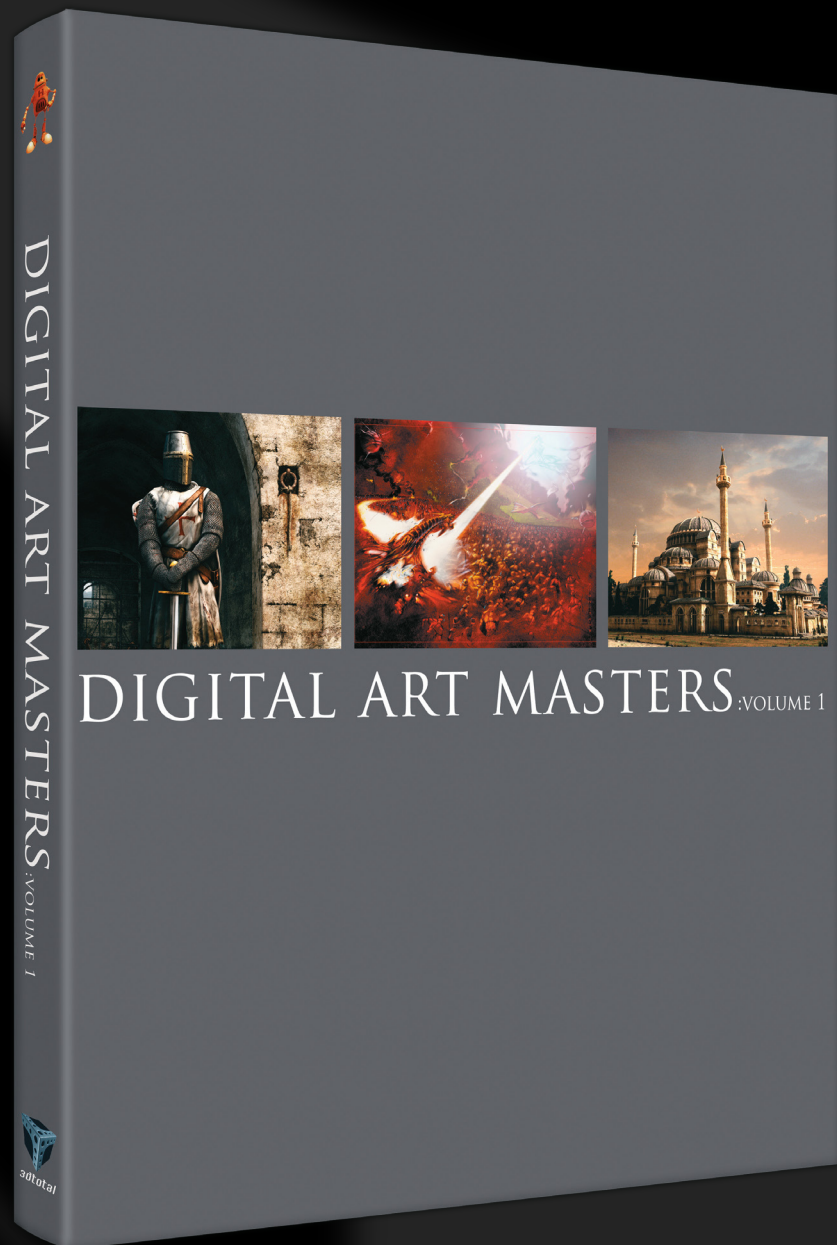
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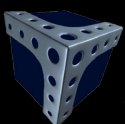
INTRODUCTION:

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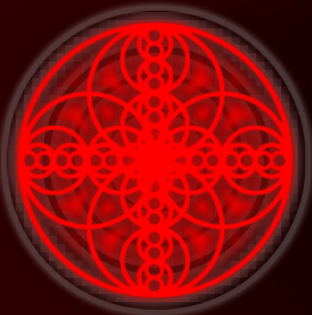
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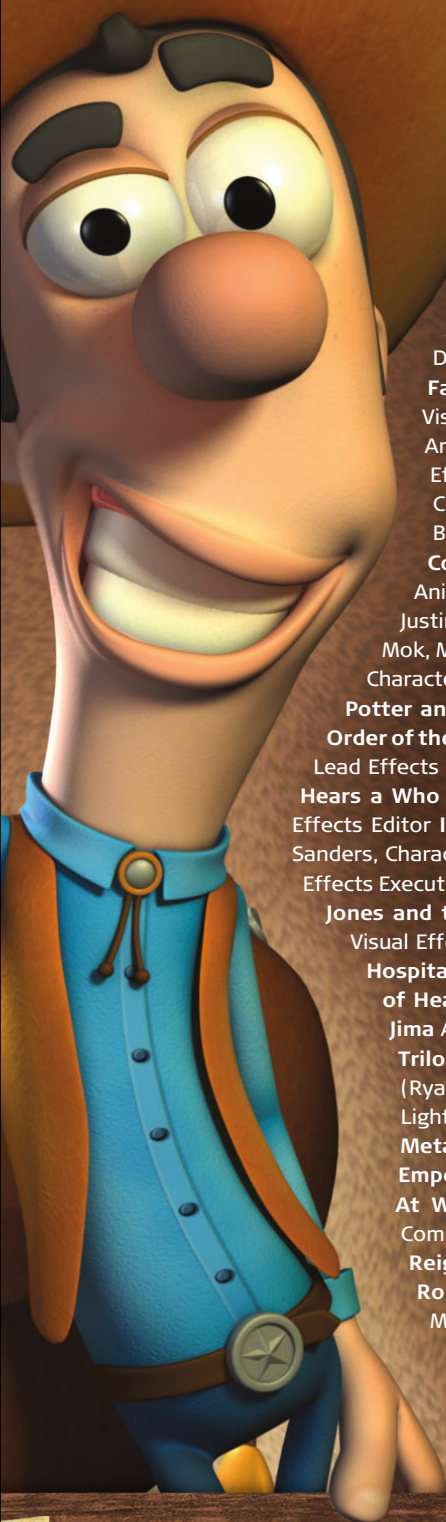
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IN THE CINEMA BACK IN
THE 80S."

USING 3D

AS A BASE FOR

2D PAINTING

This tutorial series will revolve around the use of 3d as a starting point for digital painting. In particular we will explore the value of Google SketchUp, a free program enabling users to quickly build 3d environments using a set of intuitive tools.

This technique is used by many contemporary artists and is used as a quick and effective way of establishing correct perspective as well as offering a moveable camera in order to experiment with compositions.

As a 3d package SketchUp is easy to learn and does not require hours of training and as an artist wishing to draw complicated scenes, this approach can prove a valuable starting point for producing a template on which to paint over.

USING GOOGLE SKETCHUP AS A BASE FOR DIGITAL PAINTING

WHY USE SKETCHUP?

Google SketchUp is a free programme enabling users to quickly and effectively build 3D environments using a number of intuitive tools. Unlike most 3D packages it is very easy to learn and does not require hours of training before decent results are achievable. It is very versatile and with regards to digital painting can prove an invaluable tool in swiftly establishing a correct perspective, as well as offering a moveable camera in order to experiment with alternative viewpoints and compositions.

An object can be made and then duplicated any number of times, so if a structural element is repeated throughout your concept then this package can quickly and accurately create such arrays. It also has a simple-to-use lighting system that enables placement of the sun according to the month and time of day by way of slider bars, thus determining physically correct shadows that can be turned on or off at the click of a button. These functions mean that as an artist wishing to draw detailed or tricky scenes, one can use SketchUp as a valuable starting point to establish a "guide template" on which to paint over.

INSTALLATION

In order to install SketchUp, click on the link below and go to Downloads on the left hand menu. Select the free version which is currently

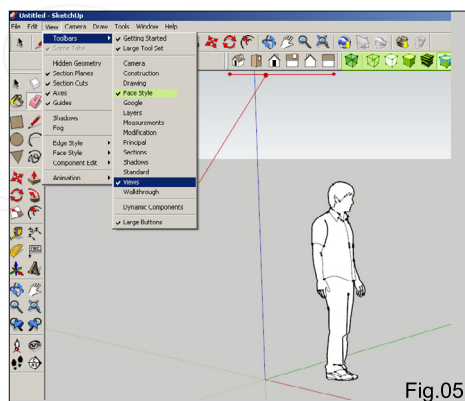


Fig.05

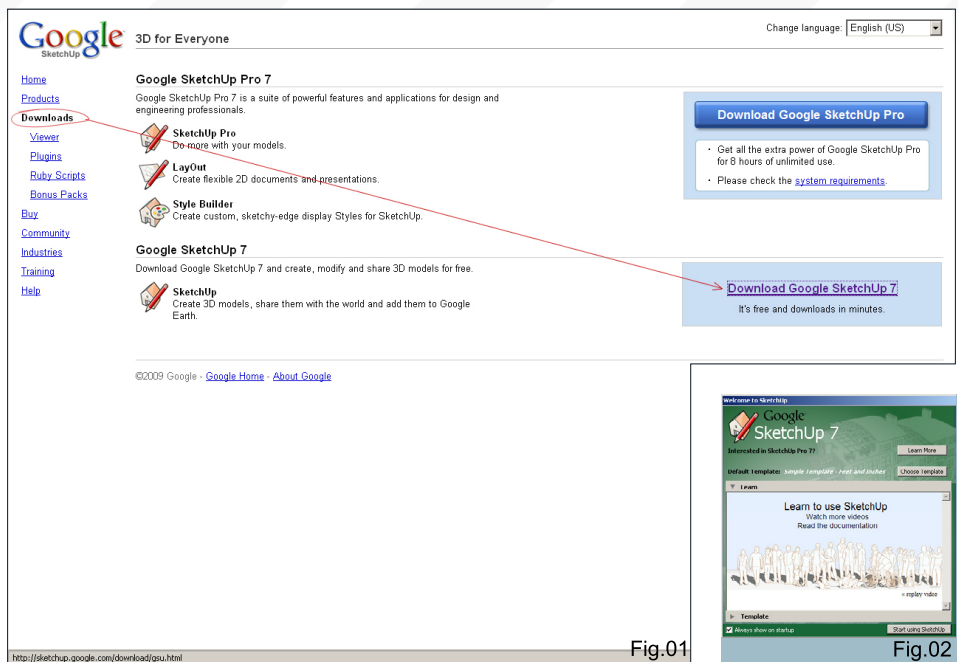


Fig.01



Fig.02

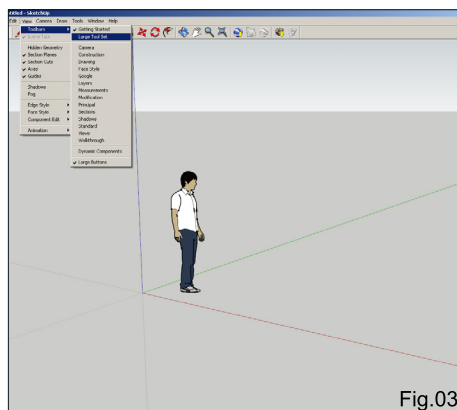


Fig.03

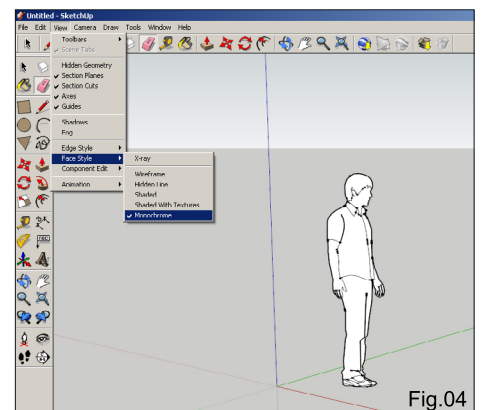


Fig.04

version 7 (Fig.01). Choose your operating system and then follow the instructions.

<http://sketchup.google.com/>

Once installed, click on the application shortcut and you will be prompted with the following dialogue box in which you are asked to choose a template (Fig.02). The scale and type of your scene will determine which you choose, but for the purposes of this tutorial we will select **Architectural Design – Feet and Inches**.

TOOLBARS AND MENUS

When SketchUp starts you will see a screen resembling Fig.03. From the main menu click on View > Toolbars > Large Tool Set; this will access more tools which will appear down the left margin. To change the display mode of the

objects in the scene click on View > Face Style; this will show a number of options, as seen in Fig.04.

If you also check Views under View > Toolbars you will see six small house icons appear below your toolbar (Fig.05). These will provide quick access to orthographic views, as well as isometric. You will notice that I have also checked Face Style in the list (highlighted in green), which has added some cube icons to represent the display modes.

This is basically where you can customise your workspace and add toolsets to speed up your workflow. For additional help go to Window > Instructor; this will open a window providing useful information on whichever tool you have currently selected.

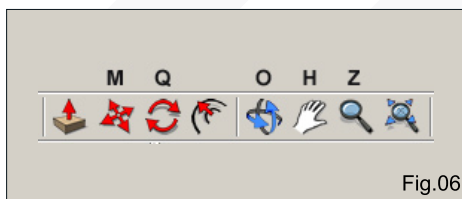


Fig.06

BASIC NAVIGATION

The key orientation tools you will use to navigate in your scene are Orbit, Pan and Zoom, which you will find on the top toolbar and whose shortcut keys are represented by O (Orbit), H (Pan) and Z (zoom). These can be seen in Fig.06.

The main tools used to directly manipulate your objects are Move (M), Rotate (Q) and Scale (S). The Scale tool appears on the left hand toolbar which you will see highlighted if you press S on your keyboard.

DRAWING SHAPES

One way of using SketchUp is to create two-dimensional shapes from which you can extrude three-dimensional objects. Select the top view and then the Line tool (Fig.07) and left-click in the viewport to begin drawing. You will notice that as you do so, the points will snap to the

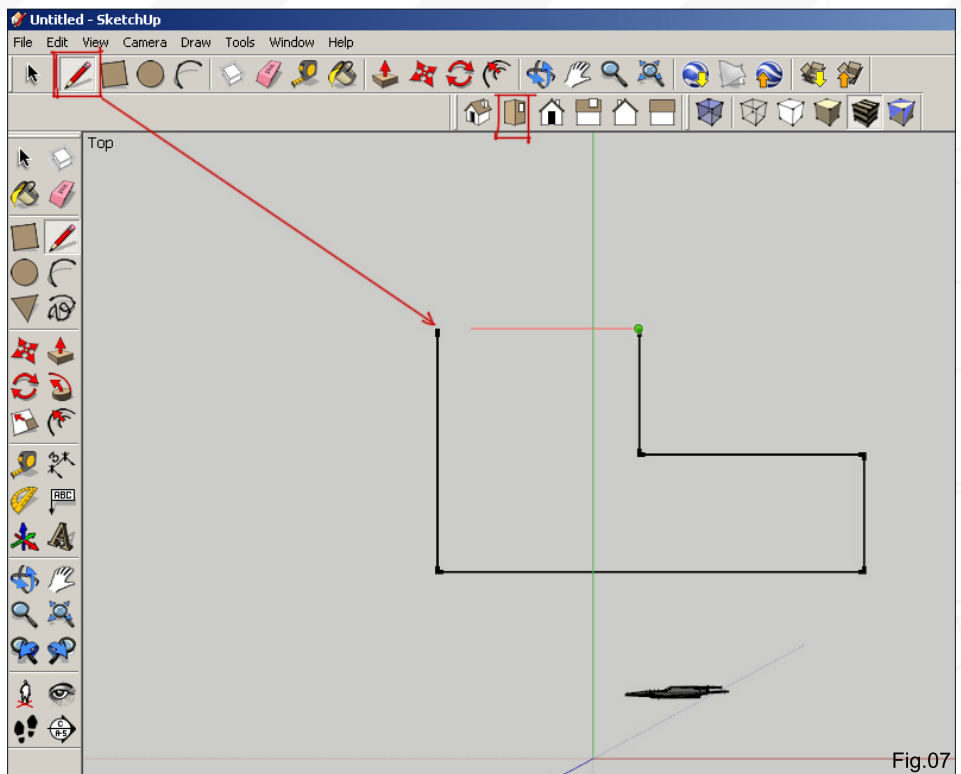


Fig.07

green and red axes, thus easily enabling the creation of right-angled structures.

When you finally close the shape by clicking on the initial point you will notice the shape turns blue, indicating a surface has been made; once a shape has become closed you can still edit

it, however. Using the Line tool, add an internal rectangle (see top diagram in Fig.08). To now make this edge become part of the exterior shape click on the Eraser tool and then on the outside edge shown in red.

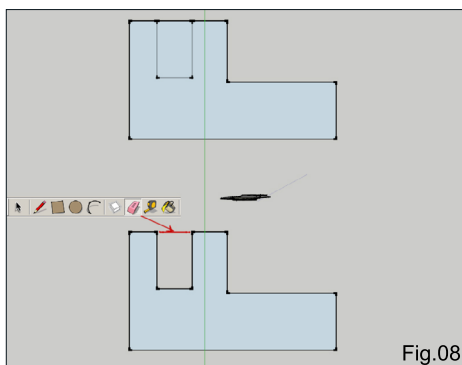


Fig.08

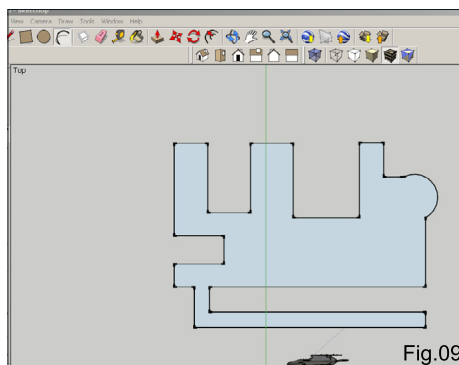


Fig.09

You can continue to cut into your shape or alternatively extend it outwards and then erase the necessary lines by using the Line tool (Fig.09). Here I have added a walkway and also a curved section using the Arc tool. You can also draw more organic shapes using the Freehand tool (Fig.10).

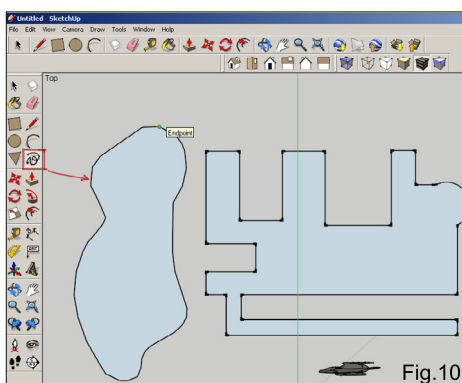


Fig.10

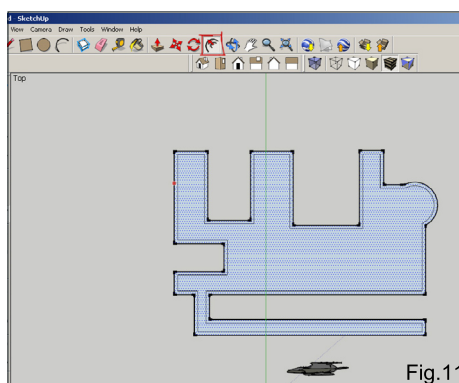


Fig.11

One other useful function, especially for architectural structures, is the Offset tool which is situated next to the Rotate tool. This enables a shape to be duplicated in order to create depth – perfect for drawing walls in a building, for example (Fig.11).

With an exterior wall depth, click on the large internal shape using the Select tool (black arrow on Toolbar) and hit delete. You can then select the Push/Pull tool and then click on the wall and raise it vertically (Fig.12). You will notice I have edited the section where the walkway adjoins

the building using the Line and Eraser tools so that this was not raised along with the outer wall.

THREE DIMENSIONS

When a shape has been converted into 3D it can be edited further by using a combination of the Line and Push/Pull tools. If you move the Line tool along an edge it will snap to the midpoint between opposing edges (Fig.13). You can then make equally spaced cuts, as shown. These new shapes can be pushed inward or pulled outward, or alternatively a new shape can be drawn and this can then be manipulated.

In Fig.14 I have used the Offset tool to create a window shape in the far left rectangle. To create the same proportioned window in the other sections simply select the Offset tool and double-click in each rectangle. To create the arches use the Arc tool and then erase the horizontal join shown by the dotted line. To create windows use the Push/Pull tool to move the shapes inwards beyond the inner wall surface or until they disappear.

Using a combination of the tools mentioned so far you will have the means through which to create and edit a wide range of forms and design detailed scenes.

ATMOSPHERICS LIGHTING

You can add atmospheric perspective in the form of fog to your scene. Go to View and check Fog, as seen in Fig.15. You will notice that the edges on my building have also been switched off, which you can control in the menu under Edge Style > Display Edges.

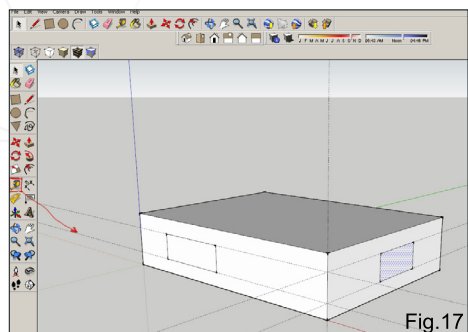


Fig.17

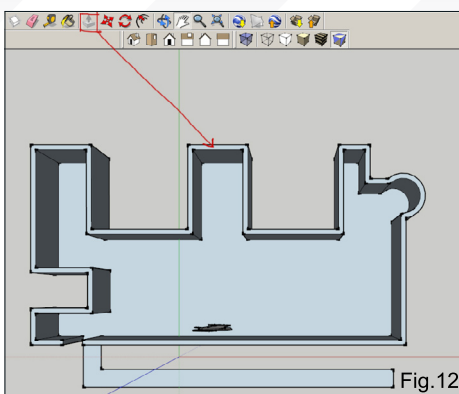


Fig.12

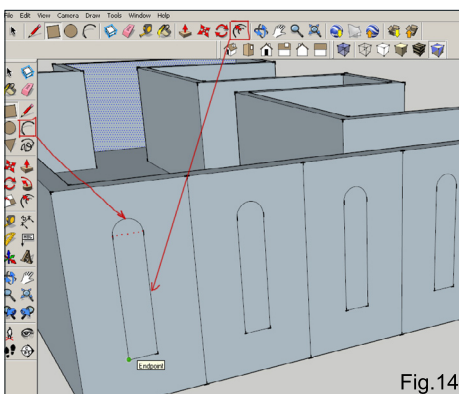


Fig.14

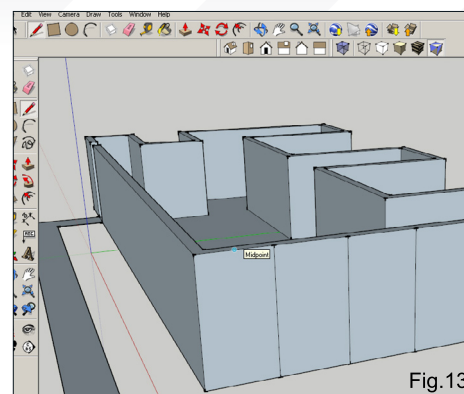


Fig.13

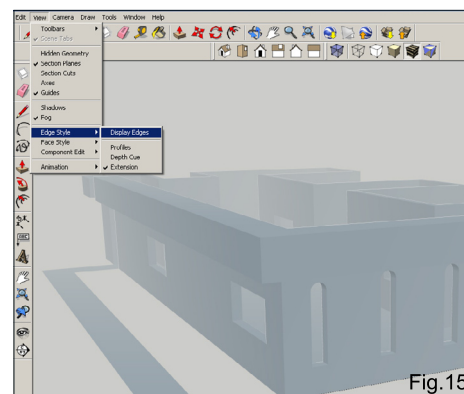


Fig.15

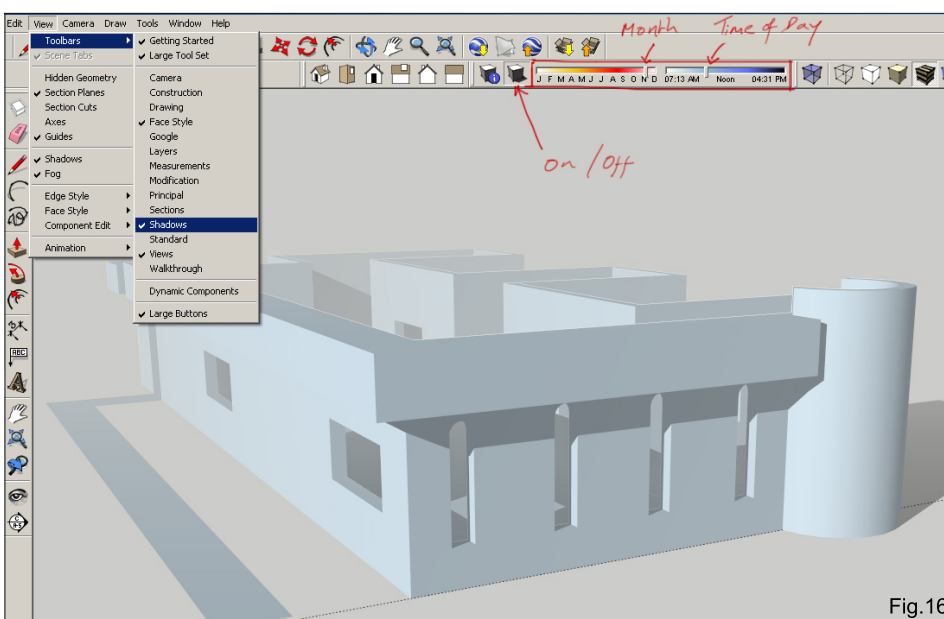


Fig.16

To add lighting effects check Shadows which is above the Fog label, and to get more control over this function go to View > Toolbars > Shadows. This will place two slider bars on your toolbar which denote the month and time of day. By adjusting these you can control the position of the sun and direction of the shadows (Fig.16). There is a little icon to switch the lighting on or off, and besides this there is also another icon which opens up some extra parameters that

alter the tonal range of the shading. You can also control whether this affects just the object itself or the ground along with it and vice versa.

ADDITIONAL TOOLS

A few other useful tools worth mentioning are the Tape Measure, Protractor and Dimension. The Tape Measure is used to draw guidelines which can then be traced over with the Line tool. In Fig.17 you can see that the tape measure

has created the dotted lines which can be used as a guide to draw the windows an equal distance from the top and bottom of the block. To delete the lines simply use the Eraser tool. The Protractor is used to create accurate angles. Move the tool to the point at which you wish to start the angle and you will see how it snaps to the three axes. Click to establish the correct plane and then click to begin the angle along the appropriate edge. Now you can set the angle using the guideline. In **Fig.18** I have used the near corner as the starting point, which I will mirror on the opposite corner.

Once the guidelines are drawn, trace them using the Line tool, as with the Tape Measure. In **Fig.19** you can see that the two angles have been drawn and then the Push/Pull tool was used to extrude a roof shape across the base block.

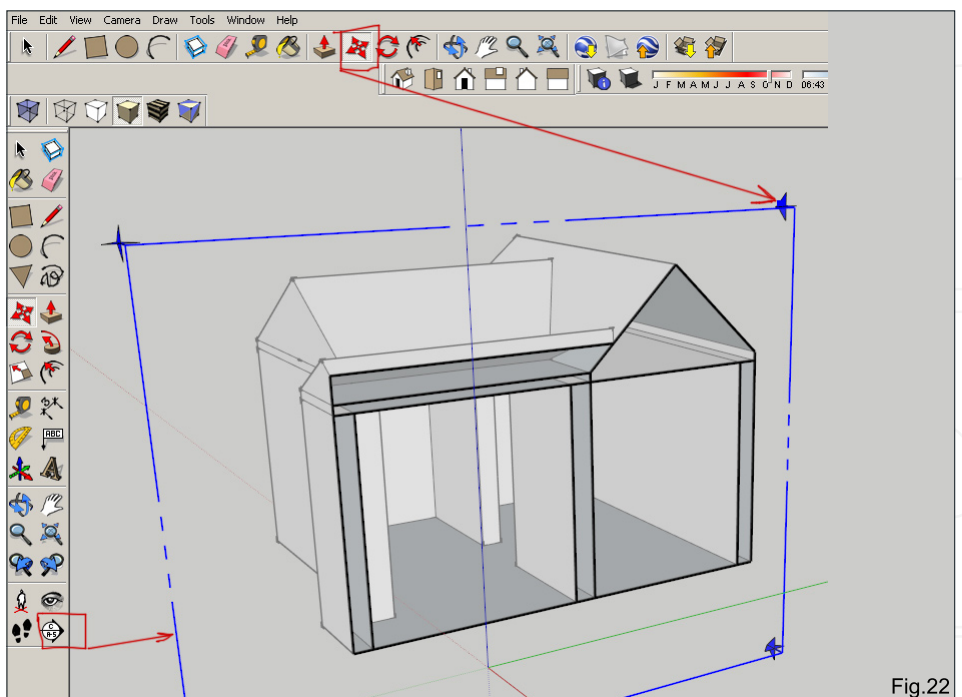
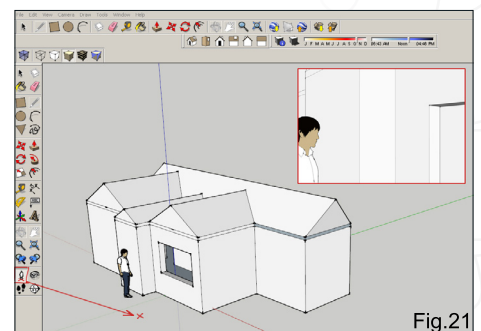
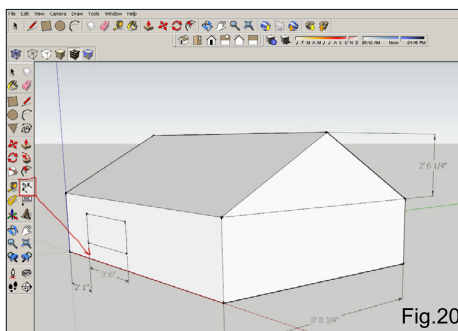
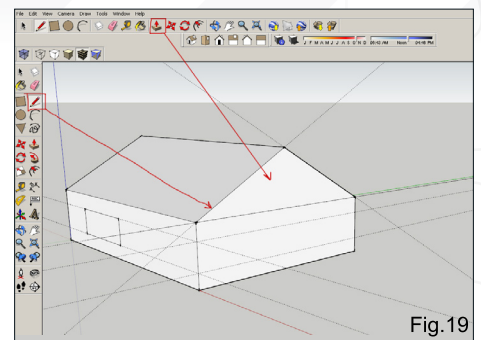
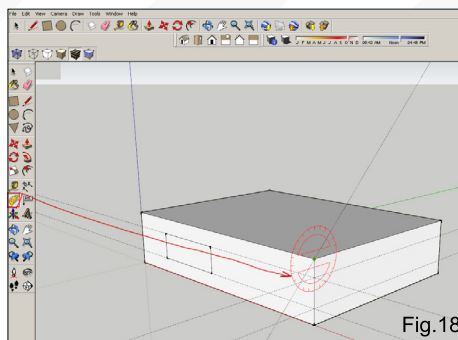
The Dimension tool simply adds a label to your scene, showing the distance between two points. Click and drag from A to B and then drag up or down to set your dimensions, once again using the Eraser tool to delete when necessary (**Fig.20**).

CAMERAS

The camera in SketchUp is initially placed at an average eye level height, so for example when you click on the Position Camera tool it will zoom in and appear around head height from the ground. In this sense scale is an important factor in your scene.

In **Fig.21** you can see a cross where I intend to position the camera, after which the viewpoint will resemble the inset image. The character has been placed in the scene to demonstrate the relationship between the scale of a character and the initial camera height. To adjust your camera, use the Look Around tool represented by the eye icon.

One final tool which may prove useful is the Section Plane tool which allows a view of a



cross-section of your object. To use this click on the tool and then align the green icon to the corresponding plane or angle you wish to view. Then select the Move tool and click on one of the corner arrows and drag in the relevant direction (**Fig.22**).

This concludes our overview which I hope has at least introduced the main tools and their functions. There are of course further lessons to learn along with other tools and techniques,

such as applying materials, but the main aim here is to introduce the interface and value of the software in terms of building a simple 3D environment which can then be used in digital painting.

RICHARD TILBURY

For more from this artist visit:
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Or contact them at:
rich@3dtotal.com



USING 3D AS A BASE FOR 2D PAINTING

Software Used: Google SketchUp and Photoshop

INTRODUCTION

In this workshop we're going to be working on a speed painting using base geometry created in the free software, Google SketchUp – nothing too detailed, just a couple of boxes as buildings, and a simple robot creation (created using the Google SketchUp tutorial featured at the beginning, by Richard Tilbury, as a guide).

SKETCHUP

SketchUp Render One

We have two SketchUp renders to start working with. The first one is a base render with the edges turned on (**Fig.01**); this image will be perfect to use to check our perspective lines, buildings and robot shapes over the top of our painting later on. I can also use the little guy close to the robot's leg, in this case, to help me

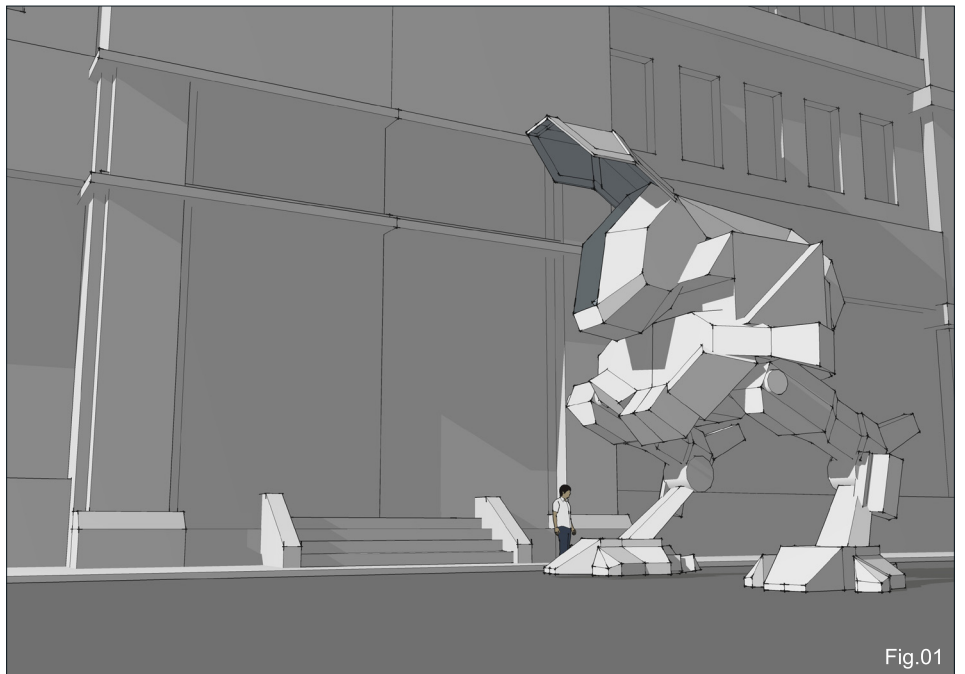


Fig.01

with understand the proportions and scale in the scene.

Concept, Mood and Color

The next step is to use your imagination; you have to elaborate in your mind the mood of the painting you are about to work on. In my case, I've envisioned a sci-fi scene like the ones we used to see in the cinema back in the 80s. I love old sci-fi movies so I've decided to paint something with predominately cold colors, with just simple touches of warm ones.

So, that is my palette and my mood for this illustration defined. Now onto the second render before we start painting.

SketchUp Render Two

For my second render (**Fig.02**), I took away the edges and added more contrast to the image; you can see how the shadows pop up a bit more and the middle grey appears between the shadows and highlights.

PHOTOSHOP

Add Color!

Now it's time to add some color to our painting, so open up the image in Photoshop (or your favorite painting software) and add two new layers. Fill these layers with cold and warm colors. I fill the first layer with a blue (cold) and the second layer with a brown or sepia tone (warm).



Fig.02

The cold layer is going to be our shadow color. How do we do this? Well it's quite simple: we set the layer blending mode to Overlay and slide the Opacity value to 62%. The shadows become blue with this blending mode, but the highlights remain white.

Next, set the warm color layer to Darken mode, and set the opacity to 86%. The highlights should now be sepia, but we can still keep the cold shadows (Fig.03).

Textures and Perspective

Now that we have our base color implemented, it's time to add some detail. Have a look in your personal texture library for a couple of photos of buildings. I've chosen some free photos from **CGTextures.com** for this piece, because the day I started this tutorial there was a huge riot in the streets of Buenos Aires and I couldn't take my camera out to grab any textures of my

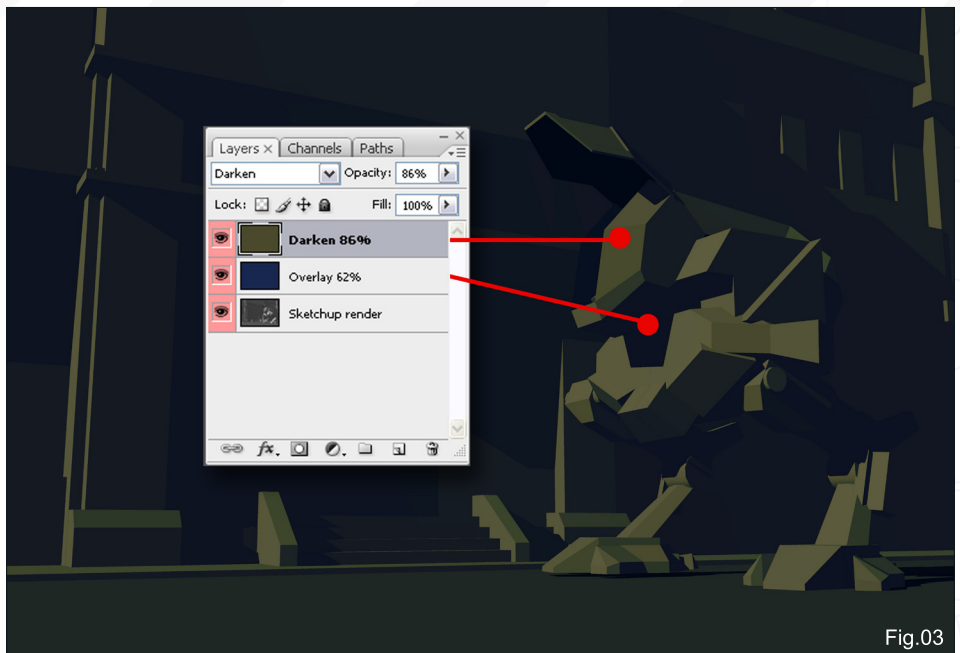


Fig.03

own. It's a great idea though to get out of your "art cave", and go and take some photos of the buildings in your neighborhood for your very own personal references (Fig.04).

With these three images we are going to texture our background. Add each one of these images to a separate layer and set the layer blending mode for each one to Overlay. Play with the



Photo source: CGTextures.com Fig.04

Opacity value to mix the buildings with the building textures with the original SketchUp render. When you switch the layer on with the edges shown on the SketchUp render (SketchUp Render One), the edges will help you to find the correct perspective.

Use the Transform tool (Ctrl + T) to set the correct perspective of the photos; you will see how easy the background will become more and more a part of the final illustration at this stage. Once you've finished with the Transform tool you should have something similar to **Fig.05**. Remember that up until this stage, we've only laid down some textures over our SketchUp render, so we still have all the fun part left to work on: the painting!

Do you see how our painting still keeps the base colors we applied before – the blue and sepia colors? That's the idea of the first step: create



Fig.06



Fig.07



Fig.05

the base of our scene to work quietly on the mood, characters and fine detail.

Illustrating the Mood

Now it's time to start working with the mood of the painting. Paint in a couple of streetlights – nothing complicated, just a dark silhouette of a streetlamp. For this step you can pick the color you have in the background to paint your streetlight; I usually use this technique to keep the color gamma balanced without any strange colors coming in.

Use references from sci-fi movies if you want to add a nice touch to the illustration. I'm using

the design of some lights featured in a classic movie, maybe one of the best sci-fi movies of all time – do you know which movie it is?

I add another layer for the light halo effect and set the blending mode of the layer to Color Dodge. Never set the Opacity to 100%, try to mix every layer with your background image!

To add a story to this image I've decided to paint with a paintbrush a couple of bullets holes in the walls, to show that a horrible crime must have happened there, or maybe even a gang war of some kind. So now we have a non-textured police robot, some bullets holes, and a nighttime street scene (**Fig.06**) – the perfect mood for our sci-fi image!

The Robot

Time to paint our robot now! With the Lasso Tool and the Elliptical Marquee Tool, we can start to add shapes to our robot design. Make a selection with these tools and paint with a soft brush (with the Pen Pressure set to Opacity) inside the shapes. This technique takes some practice to get right, but you'll find it really useful for speed paintings or concept artwork.

Use the base 3D model to check the perspective and the shape of the robot; as you can see I'm using the same background palette to keep picking those colors for the robot (**Fig.07**).



Fig.08



Fig.09

The body of the robot is smoother than the 3D model, as I've decided to use curved shapes instead. I want to take my time with this bad boy, working it section by section until I'm happy with the outcome. I also send some layers to the trash can at this stage until I really nail the final design of my robot!

I keep working on the body and start on the front leg. Remember: during this step I'm just using the Lasso Tool and Marquee Tools with a soft brush to paint inside the selections. The back leg is a copy of the front leg, only I "deform" the shape using the Transform tool until it snaps the correct position of the new leg. Once happy with the body and the legs, I'll continue with the fine detail (Fig.08).

Details

On a new layer now I add the POLICE text and the robot's identification number, following the shape of the robot using the Warp Tool (Fig.09). This is one of the most useful tools in Photoshop!

The last step is to throw some life into the painting, so I'm going to paint some cops looking for clues in the crime scene; one of the

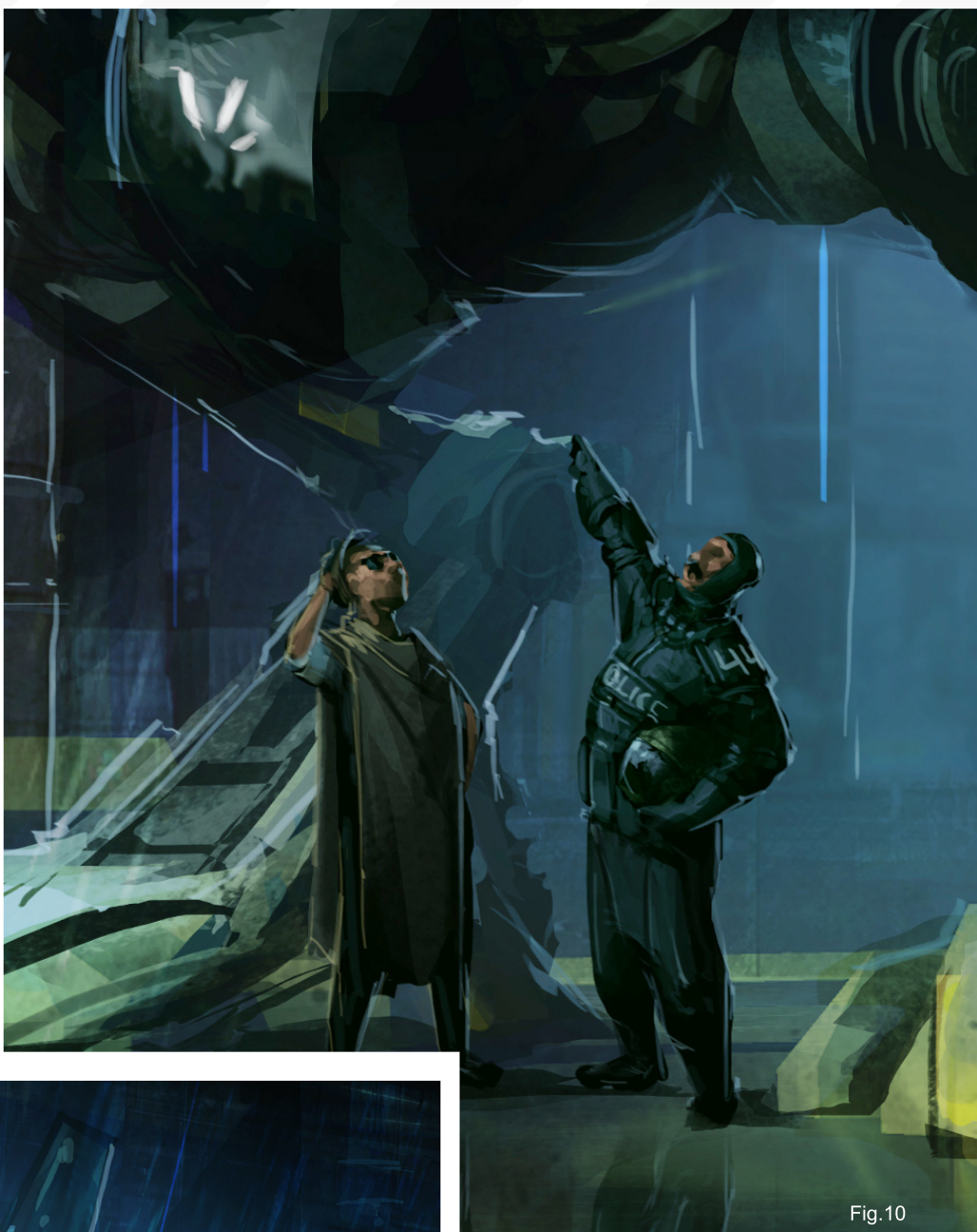


Fig.10

policemen is showing his partner, the robot (as if it were a car), the DO NOT CROSS yellow police tape (Fig.10).

With my rain brush I paint on another new layer a rain texture, just over the streetlights (Fig.11).

And that's all folks! Here is the final painting (Fig.12).

Painting is easy if you know exactly what you want to achieve with it, so keep up the practice – do it every day (I know I do) – and stay tuned to 2DArtist for more tutorials in the future!



Fig.11

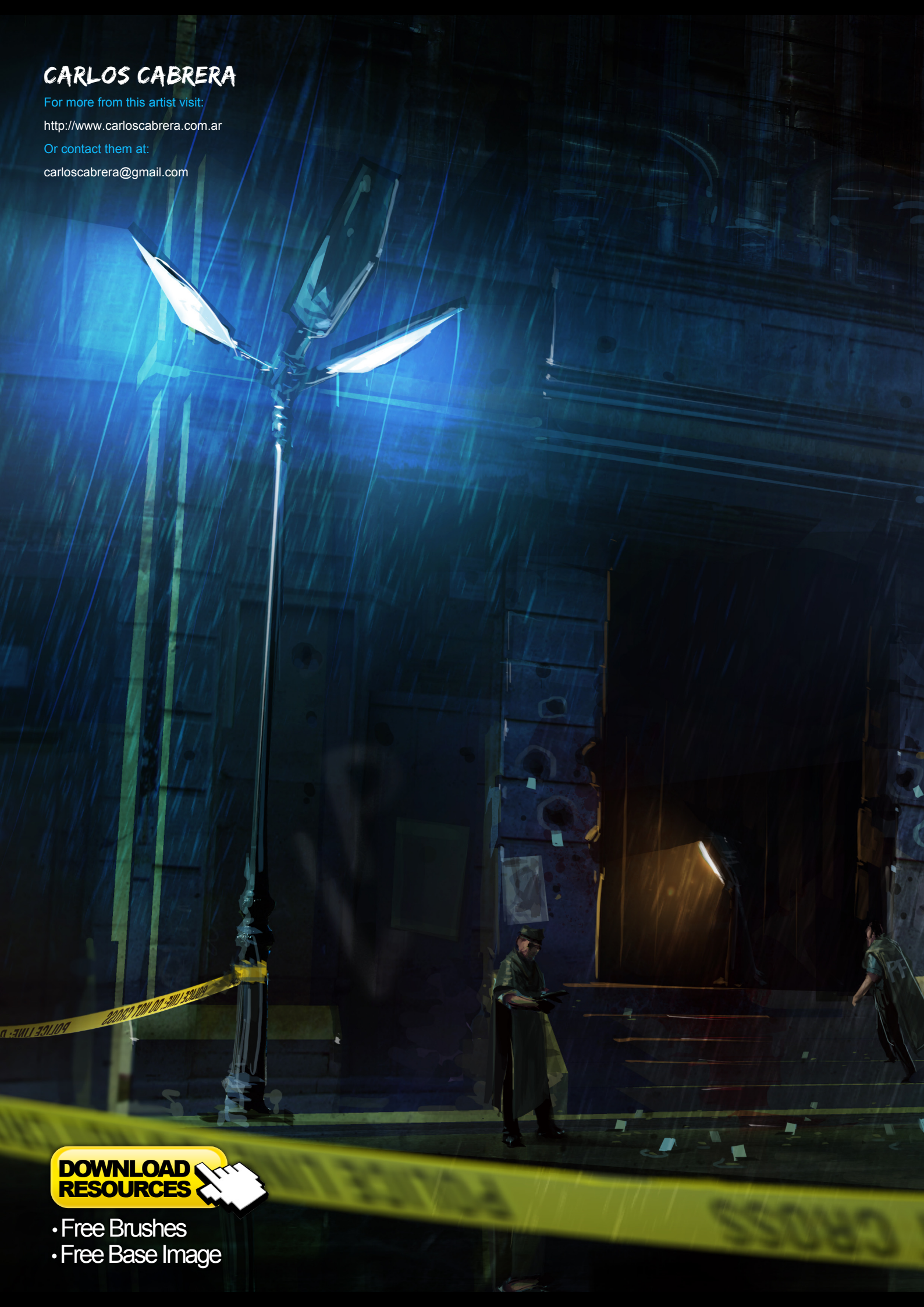
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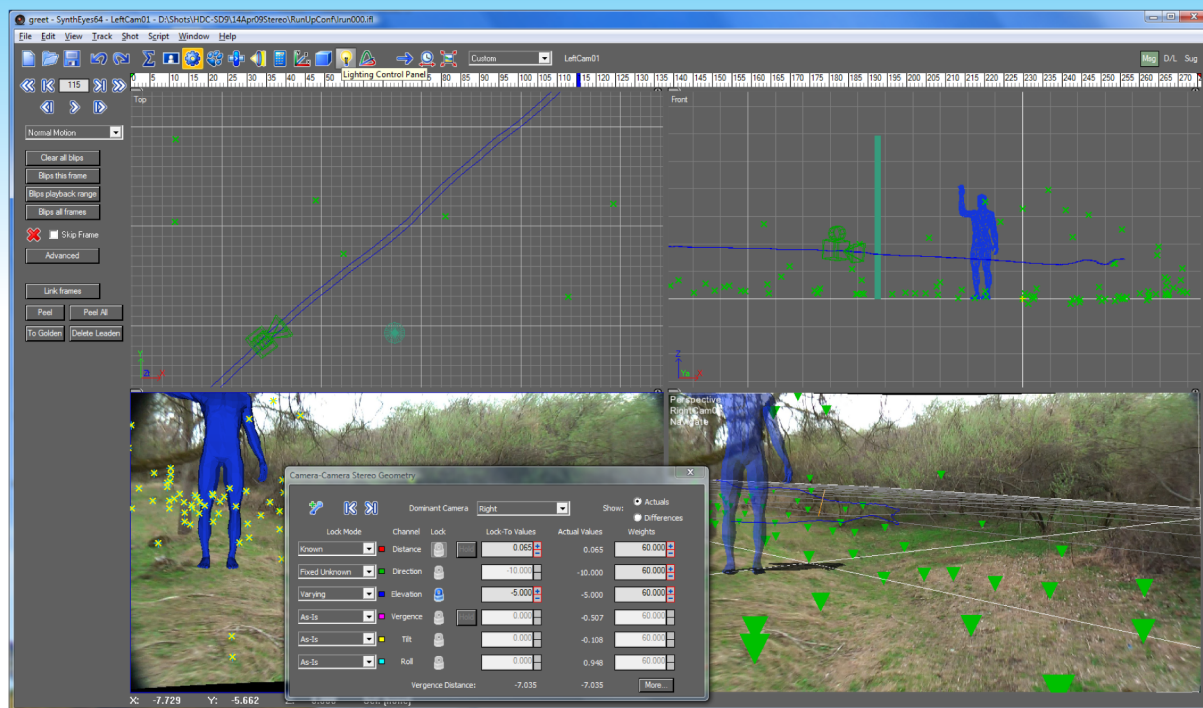
Fig.12



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CUSTOM BRUSHES

An artist's brushes have always been a vital part of any painter's set of tools, and remain the single asset that links paint with canvas. As such, they are crucial to how we view and interpret an artwork, and they afford the artist with a means through which to convey an idea or feeling. This has always been true throughout the history of art, and is no less important within a digital context. Software such as Photoshop and Painter essentially combine and fuse paint, canvas and brushes into a single tool. However, within this complex set of "tools", brushes retain certain autonomy with their own, distinct set of parameters and presets, offering artists the freedom to affect and vary the way paint is applied. This principle of customizing brushes forms the focus of this set of tutorials, and aims to show how individual artists exploit these techniques to achieve some interesting results!

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CUSTOM BRUSHES- PEOPLE AND ANIMAL BRUSHES

Software Used: Photoshop

INTRODUCTION

Beautiful paintings hide many hidden and surprising discoveries, which is why, no doubt, you will enjoy looking at them for a while, losing yourself inside their secrets. The more variety you have in the surface, lines and textures of your painting, and once you know how to control the nature of your brushwork, the images you create will be much richer, and will never be boring!

To illustrate the creation of some brushes for people and animals, I have painted a new image, titled "Pu's Forest" for the animal section (Final.01), and my latest portrait piece, "Lady in Red", will be used to demonstrate some brushes created for interesting effects on human characters (Final.02).

ANIMALS

I've always loved pandas – both giant and the smaller red pandas – perhaps because of their gentle nature, their cuddly appearance, and



their modest way of living. It would surely be wonderful to just eat your favorite food all day long, and sleep most of the time, right? But the fact is that pandas, like so many other animals today, are in danger of becoming just a cute memory and a symbol of the WWF, if things don't change soon. We're all family on this small planet after all, and it was this concern that encouraged me to paint this innocent life that lives among us.

In this first section of the tutorial I'm going to show you how I painted Pu's Forest, and how I created certain custom brushes for this special artwork.

PAINTING PU'S FOREST-A WALKTHROUGH

References

We'll need to find a couple of references to



Fig.01

make a good start – just a few photos from the internet should be enough to get a good understanding of how fur works, with pandas in this case.

Step One: Sketch

We want to sketch the animal in roughly – I'm using the Paintbrush Tool Texture Comb, in Photoshop. With a 15 pixel brush, Spacing at 0 per cent, Other Dynamics turned on, and Pen Pressure at 0 per cent, I sketch in the figure, keeping the main reference photo close by (Fig.01).

Note: Paintbrush Tool Texture Comb is a CS2-default brush in the Wet Media Brushes set (available in Photoshop CS, CS2, CS3, and Photoshop Elements 3+).

Step Two: Background

I choose my background early on. It's good to pick up a background that will compliment the main figure and not overpower it, and in this case I select a personal photo from my library

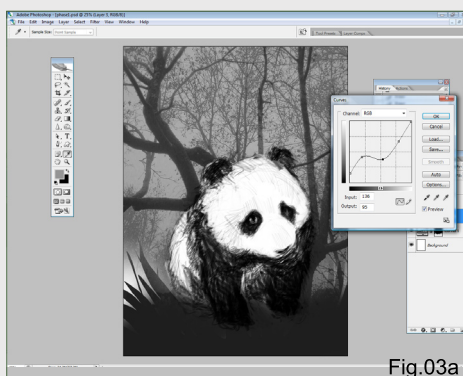


Fig.03a



Fig.02

because I like the tree's interesting form, with it giving room for sky and space. I desaturate the photo to keep balance between the contrast and tonal values (Fig.02).

Step Three: Masks

I want to create masks now to define the basic colors and lighting before rushing into the painting work. To achieve a genuine impression and to allow the viewer to really dive into the image, I need to define the source of light and set the tone of the shadows. This is easiest to do using Adjustment Masks, by lassoing the highlighted areas around the figure and adjusting the Curves. I modify the tonal values to get a light, but strong, yellow backlight, and greenish shades (Fig.03a – b).



Fig.03b

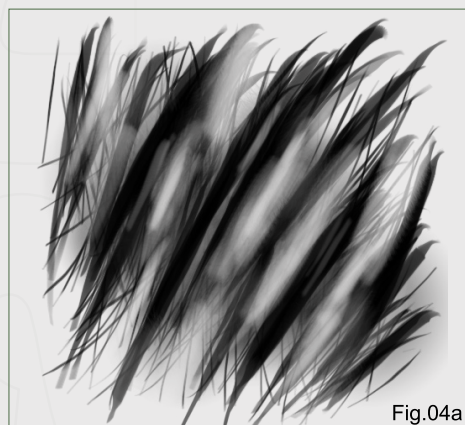


Fig.04a

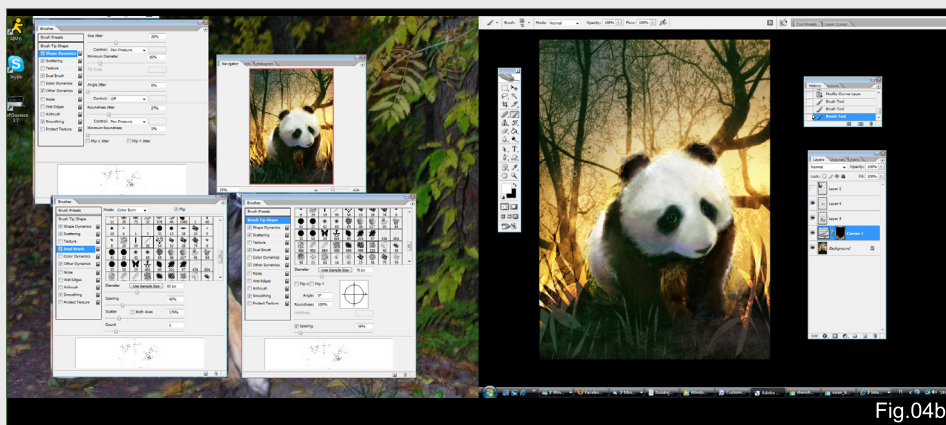


Fig.04b

Step Four: Custom Brushes!

It's now time to start playing with some big brushes. The first fur brush I want to create to aid this painting will not be a very subtle one, but will be made to fill the blank areas of the panda's coat and give the feeling that it's a living

three-dimensional creature, rather than simply a flat impression of a panda.

So to make this brush I go to File > New, set the size of the new canvas to 500 by 500 pixels, at 300 pixels/inch, and select Transparent from

the Background Contents menu. I then paint wide and thin brushstrokes across the canvas, using basic round brushes with Other Dynamics turned on. I erase some of the brush marks between the lines, and when happy I go to Edit > Define Brush Preset, and name the brush (Fig.04a).



Fig.04c

I can now use this brush to paint fur, with increased Spacing to at least 50 per cent, and Shape Dynamics on and set to Pen Pressure. Keeping the brush's Opacity less than 40 per cent, the result remains translucent and is wonderful for painting animal fur.

I decide to add the Paintbrush Tool Texture Comb to my newly created fur custom brush, to which I apply plenty of Scatter and Angle Jitter, and I achieve a nice varied result which can then be used to give texture to my foreground painting (Fig.04b – c).

Step Five: Using Painter

I sometimes find Painter useful to assist with my paintings. To soften the base hair and to add more "fluffiness" to it, I find it interesting to open up Painter and lightly use the Fine Feathering Brush (Oils) for the fur (Fig.05a – b). This stage is of course optional.

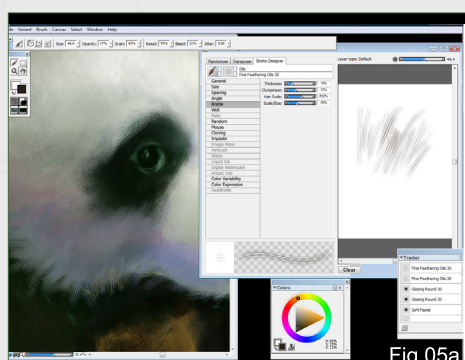


Fig.05a



Fig.05b

Step Six: More Custom Brushes!

The more you are willing to make hair brushes, the more natural the results should become, since fur is such a massive and complex structure as a whole, and so there is no such thing as simplicity involved here.

For this next brush I begin with the starting canvas as shown in **Fig.06a**. Using a canvas size as large as 550 pixels, I build up some varied brushstrokes using a Paintbrush titled, "Ornament 6". I have no Other Dynamics or Spacing turned on, I just paint, making long, clear brushstrokes over the canvas, and once finished I simply save by defining the new brush preset.

The next hair brush I want to make is 300 by 300 pixels in size, and it's made using the vector Pen Tool in Freeform mode (with Pen Pressure) with the Ornament 3 brush, Spacing at 25 per cent. This particular brush is excellent at showing hair which is close-up, for example on the face area and around clear edges. Whilst

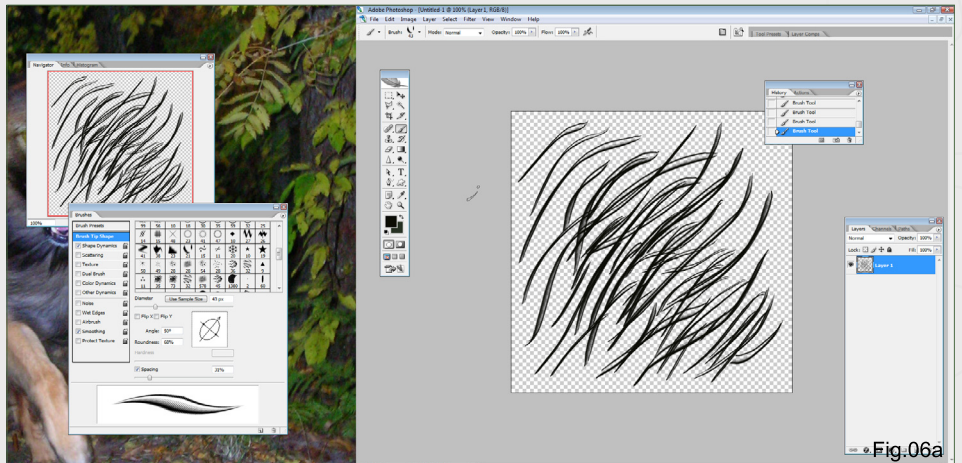


Fig.06a

painting with this new brush, it's convenient to use the Pen Tilt setting, to make sure the hair flows in the right direction as you paint (**Fig.06b – c**).



Fig.06b

Note: The Ornament 3 brush is a default brush in the Assorted Brushes set in CS2. The Ornament brushes are simply default brushes, and the Pen Tool is used to make the actual strokes; for example, you draw the free lines with the Pen Tool and then right-click over them – I use the Stroke Path with this particular Ornament 3 brush.

Note: The Pen Tool is quite uncommon, but it's a really awesome tool and serves great with quick illustrations! I use it in my artworks because it gives a clear line and form shapes, and it's quick and easy to adjust later on. To make brushes it also serves well since it doesn't leave any fuzziness or "mushiness" to it, and the result stays sharp. Play around with it for yourself, if you're new to the Pen Tool!

Step Seven: Feather Brushes!

With the image progressing things are getting more and more subtle, so as we paint we'll find that we need to decrease our brushes in size.



Fig.06c

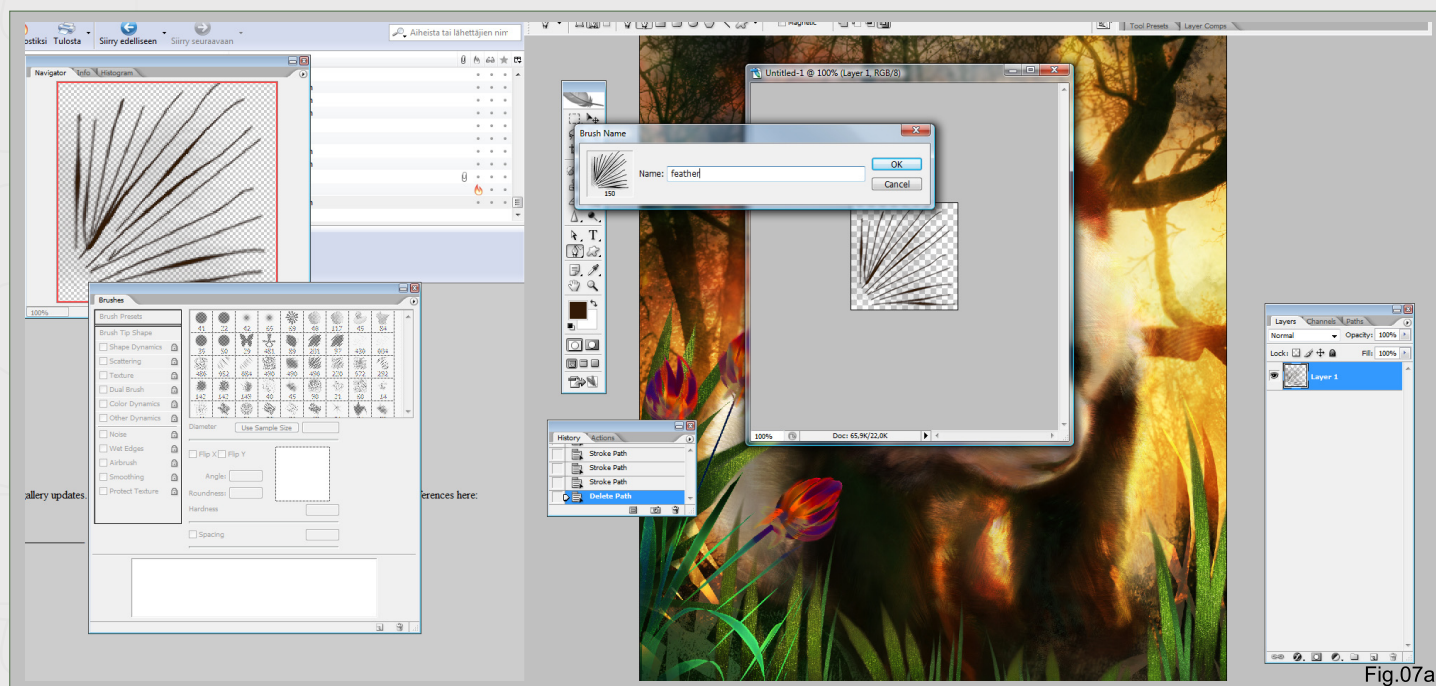


Fig.07a

The next two brushes I'm going to walk you through are 150 pixels each in size. The first one is the simpler one, made with just a few strong strokes from one corner of the canvas, spreading them out like a fan whilst preventing the lines from touching one another to keep the result "airy" (Fig.07a). This brush is nice to use for details, and to add even more dimension to surfaces. It's a great one for both fur and feathers, and it's all about mixing a few good brushes together, not just sticking with one for too long.

The other brush suitable for feathers/fur is shown in Fig.07b. This one is constructed with the Freeform Pen Tool again, with Pen Pressure on, and I basically warp the ends to be more rounded, making a bundle with curving edges. By adding a few transparent gradients to the ends and erasing a few parts of it away, there's a nice transparency involved, so when painting, the strokes can easily blend in with the layer.

I use this brush for the little bird in the foreground, mostly painting it with small tip using



Fig.07b

various Normal/Overlay/Screen/Color Dodge modes. By changing the Spacing and Shape Dynamics, this brush also works just as great for both small details and for texturing larger areas (Fig.07c).

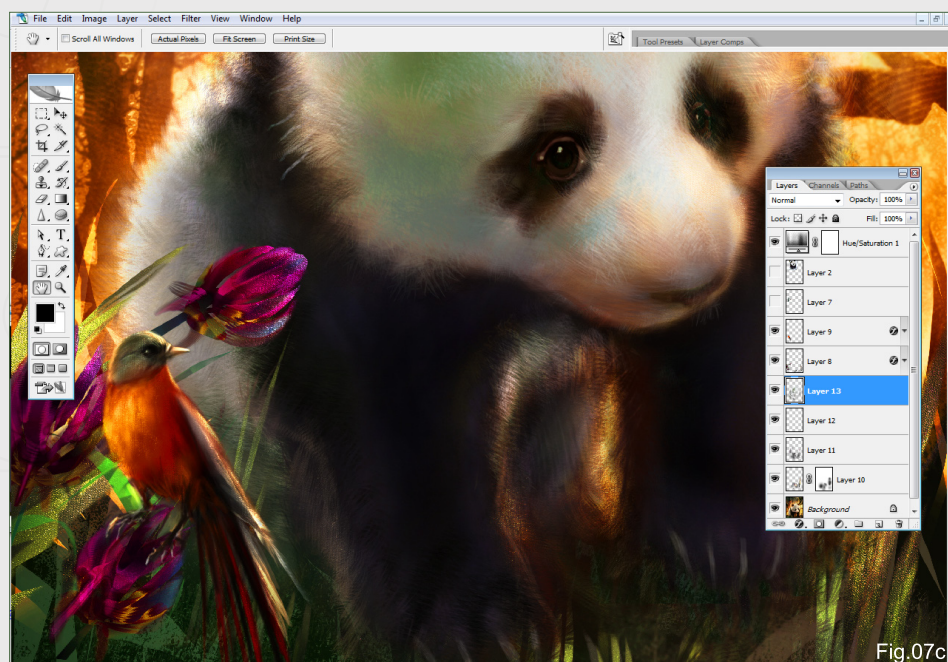


Fig.07c

Step Eight: Detail Brush!

I want to refine the image now, and as part of this process I'm going to make a special brush for the details. With the painting coming close to the finish line, I find it necessary to make a single-haired brush to bring out the sunlight and highlight some of the hairs.

I must point out that throughout the painting process there have been plenty of soft translucent gradients used in Screen and Multiple modes, and for all the shades and color variations I have been using masks. So building this scene is not just about brushwork, but about

switching between methods to bring life to this adorable panda cub.

So back to the brush, this single-haired custom brush I'm going to make on a 250 pixel canvas, so there's room to make it much smaller or bigger, as I need to. With long, slim strokes, and warping the lines by compressing them all together, the result is slightly rough and natural (Fig.08a).

I use this brush for the areas on panda's side, cheeks, nose, and on top of his head – around the ears, in particular (Fig.08b).

Step Nine: Touch-Ups

I need to make some final touch-ups now with the Pen Tool, and finish the surface texturing. For great final results you need to take the Pen Tool and a very slim brush – Hard Elliptical at around 5-8 pixels works fine for this. At this

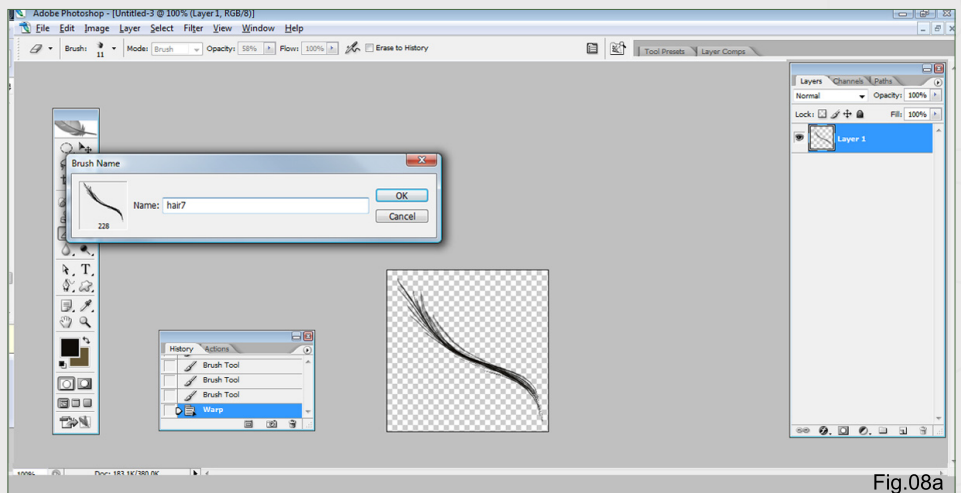


Fig.08a

point, the whole image is flattened and you can look it from a distance and make your finishing moves. Working freehand, make a few distinctive lines to areas that emphasize the fur and form of the animal. Add the brushstroke to the Pen Tool, and transform the path by warping it. Repeat this, changing the Stroke to Screen Mode and Linear Dodge mode; with dark hair

use Multiply mode instead. Remember to erase the sharp tips away very gently. Repeat this until there are distinctive hairs showing clearly. The whiskers are painted in a similar way, using a light beige tone with the brush in Screen mode.

Note: For those who are less familiar with the Pen Tool, what we are doing is adding strokes to the Pen's path lines by using Screen and Linear Dodge modes as you make the Stroke (right-click > Stroke Path). Once this is done, you can delete the Path and use the Free Transform's Warp-tool to reshape the form of the brush.

With all the elements in place I can finally add some highlights with a canvas texture to give a nice traditional feel to the surface, so it looks alive and bright. Sharpening the work is the last thing I do, but of course I'm careful not to overdo it.

PEOPLE

In this second section of the tutorial we're moving on to people, away from those adorable animals. I've chosen my latest portrait, Lady in Red, to show the use of custom brushes for this genre, because it is a good contradiction between the subjects and styles of this tutorial, as well a nice comparison to illustrate overall how different brushes serve different kinds of purposes with regards to painting themes. I'm not going to go through the painting process of this piece, as I did with Pu's Forest, but I will instead give some examples of how this



Fig.08b



Skin Brush

Mixed Brush

This brush is also great for adding elegant details such as around the head area and give airy and flow to the work – best when it's used with plenty of Spacing and Shape/Angle Jitter.



Fuzzy/Clean Hair Brush

This is easy to create: just use the same Freeform Pen to make different smooth twirls and wavy lines across the canvas (in this case 400 by 400 pixels in size), fill the lines with black, and then save the result as new brush preset (**Fig.11a**). Now, by altering the Shape Dynamics, Spacing,

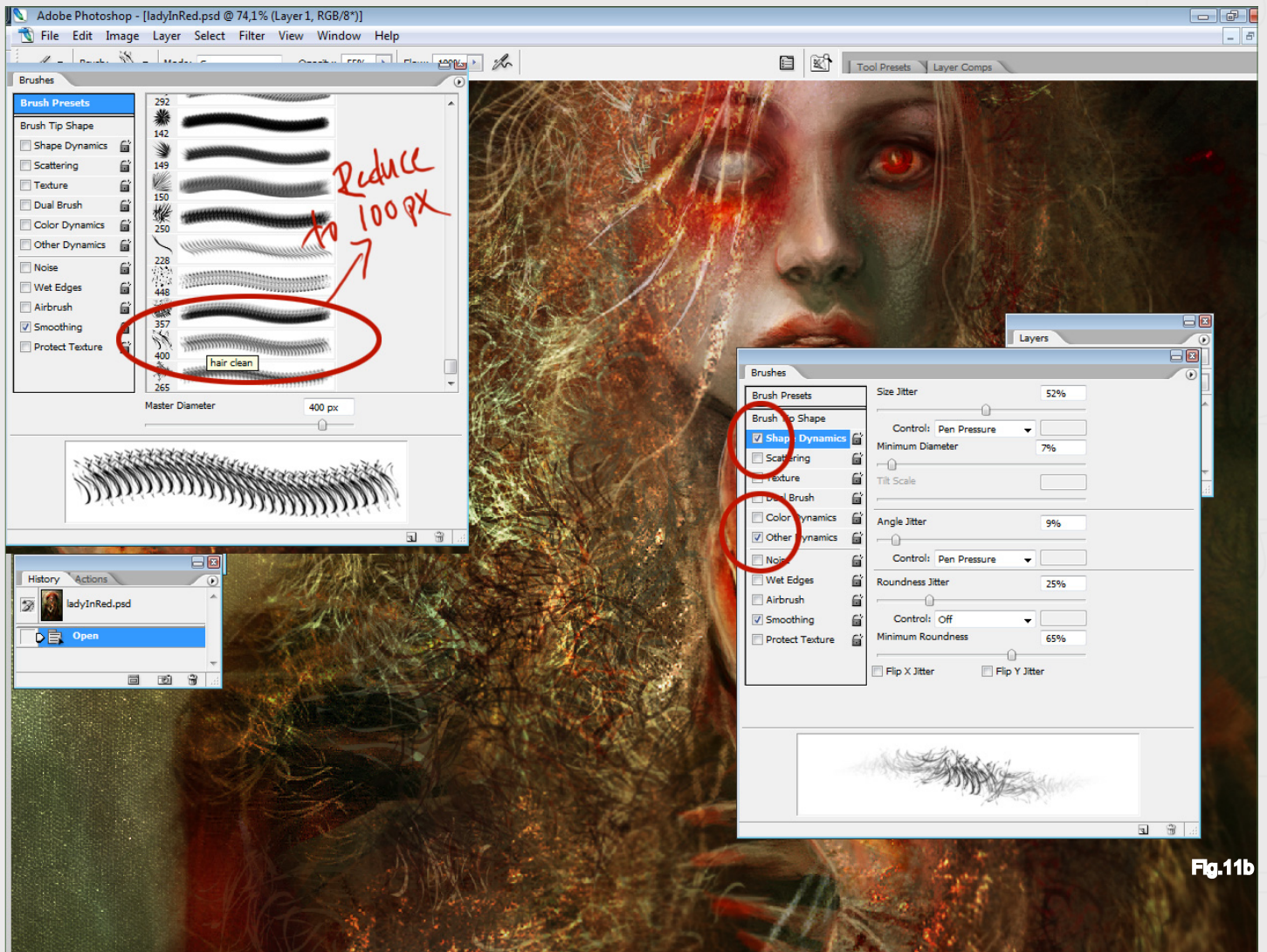


Fig.11b

and Other Dynamics, you can make a really interesting hair type using this brush (Fig.11b).

Another Skin Brush

For this other skin brush, I simply take a public photograph from the internet with an example of straw. I click on part of it with the Lasso Tool, and take the selection for the basis of a new

brush, using a canvas of 300 by 300 pixels. I use this skin texture for the hand, and for the arm's skin to make it look pretty disgusting – dry and fallen off, like she's a zombie of some sort (Fig.12a – b).

OK, well that's about it from me! I hope all of these examples have been useful and

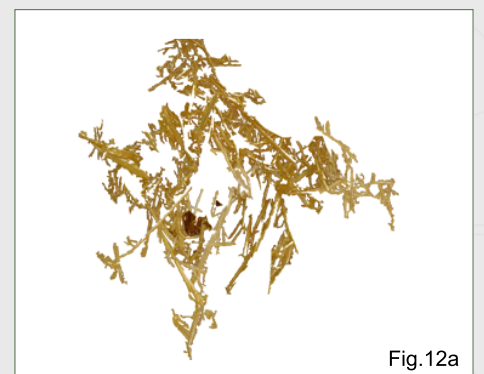


Fig.12a

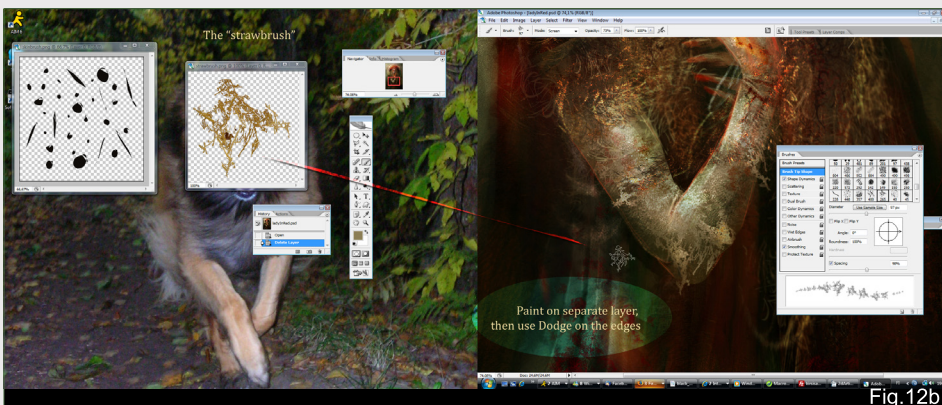


Fig.12b

interesting, and that you've enjoyed reading this tutorial. I hope you have many great moments with your own paintings – enjoy it!

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DYNAMIC CHARACTERS



ENHANCING YOUR CHARACTER CONCEPTS

This series of tutorials aims to show some of the methods and processes used to design and develop characters from initial thumbnail sketches through to a final concept. The series will be divided into five parts and will focus on the general design methods commonly used by character artists. It will begin with quick sketching techniques used to suggest ideas and develop a theme before moving onto creating variations once a subject is established. The third instalment will culminate in a finished concept design, after which we will move onto the importance of posing your character and the impact this has on their personality. The series will conclude with a chapter dedicated to choosing suitable eye levels and camera views to best convey an emotional state or emphasise a storyline.

CHAPTER 1 | Thumbs & Silhouettes

CHAPTER 2 Visual Brainstorming – Variations on a Theme

CHAPTER 3 Speed Painting & Concept Design

CHAPTER 4 DYNAMIC AND EXAGGERATED POSES

Chapter four will move onto the topic of posing characters and the importance this has in relation to personality and adding a dynamic to your designs. Choosing a suitable posture and using exaggeration can make all the difference and this is where we gain an insight into the importance of such topics when trying to describe a characters inner nature.

CHAPTER 5 Camera Placement, Framing, Fore-shortening & Distortion



PART 4 DYNAMIC AND EXAGGERATED POSES

INTRODUCTION

To create a dynamic and exaggerated pose is to push the limits of human (or animal) physics. This becomes much easier if one has an understanding of the anatomical make-up of the human body. Many artists have spent lifetimes figuring out the mechanics and how the "human machine" performs under various stresses. It can take a lifetime to perfect the mechanics of the body's movements and gain the understanding of how all the pieces fit together to form the perfect puzzle. For the sake of using this information to help you perform in the animation and entertainment



Fig.01



Fig.02



Fig.03

industry, simplifying is just as important as understanding the complexities of the human (or animal) form.

In figure drawing, this is an incredible practice that must remain in one's studies until we have all grown the long white beard worn by those giants that have come before us (ladies, please excuse the beard reference). Giants such as Michelangelo, Rembrandt, Raphael, Parmigianino and countless others, all spent a lifetime accumulating the knowledge of the human body to plaster images on high ceilings, religious institutions and various cultural meeting spots.

These images are various studies I have drawn recently (Fig.01 – 03). In the following images, however, you'll see more of a purpose than in these initial ones.

That purpose is simply: the story.

STORY

The story should always be in your head when you are after anything that deals with gesture drawing for any medium or platform you are designing for. Imagining what the person,

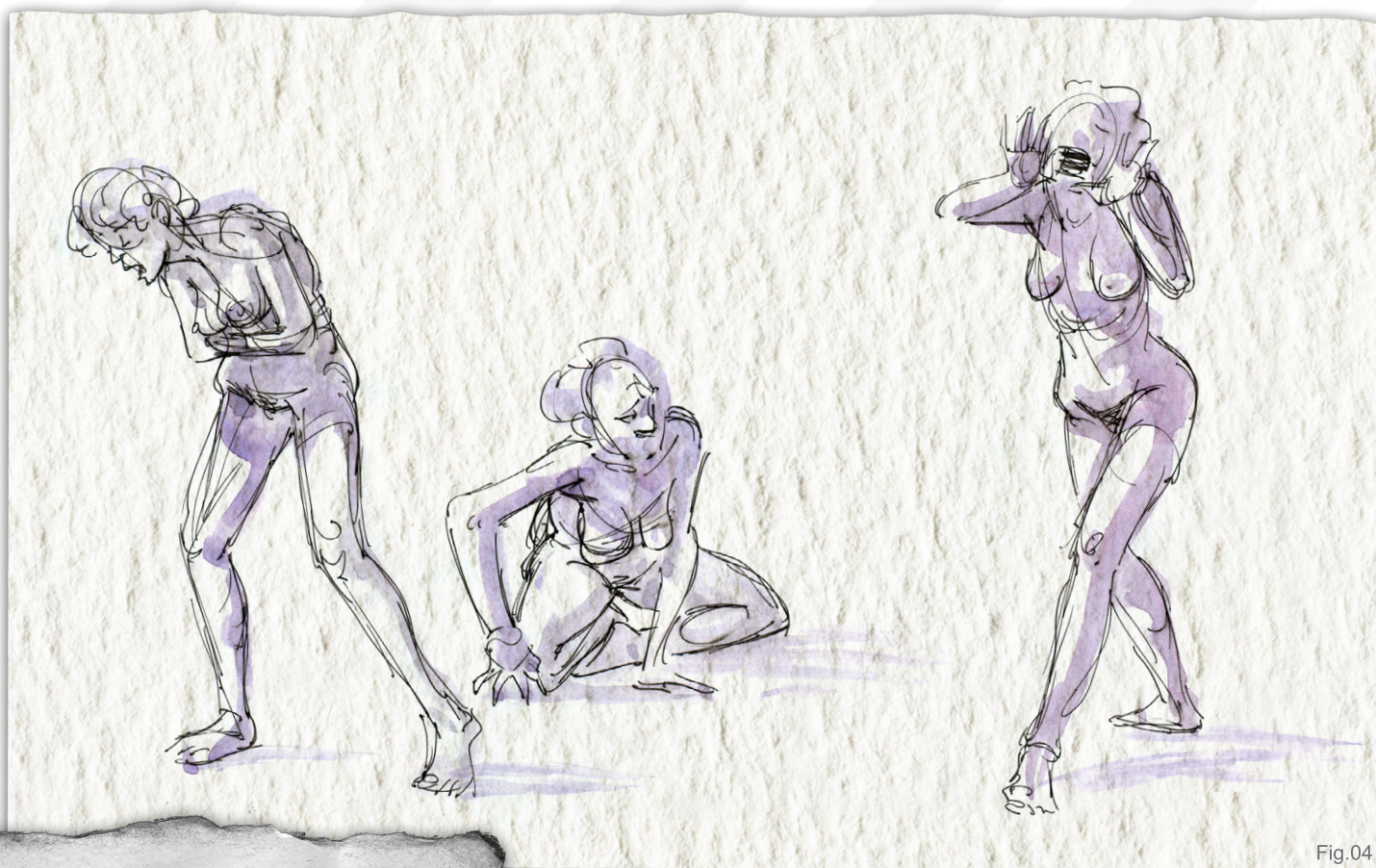


Fig.04

character or beast is thinking will make your work transcend the typical study we happen upon on various portfolios, blogs or websites as we scour the Internet for sources of inspiration.

As you can see in these quick sketches (Fig.04), there is a thought behind the sketches, not just an application of how light falls upon the form. Perhaps thinking in terms of feeling ill, worriedly on the lookout, or yelling something specific will determine a better understanding of not just the pose but the story of what's happening for this particular pose. This type of thinking is the first step in creating a dynamic and story-driven "interpretation" of how to approach sketches that will lead to final rendered pieces. Without this first step you may have a beautiful, well-rendered piece full of incredible and dramatic lighting that suggests the ultimate battlefield, strewn with the bodies of warriors placed

under the foot of the victor, yet it may appear dead or somewhat soulless. This is generally due to a lack of dynamic and exaggerated posing.

STANDING POSES

Let's start with an example of a person standing at the bus stop waiting for the bus to come and pick them up to carry them to their destination. Pulling out the trusty sketchbook and observing life is just as important as sharpening a needle-sharp pencil to do figure drawing or holding a stylus ready to begin an illustration!

Please note: I am an artist who primarily works in the animation industry and my personal preference is in finding character and pushing the pose to support the action and personality that a particular individual would exhibit.

In the first example, perhaps an elderly man is waiting by the bus stop, happily content to get to his next destination. As a character designer and visual development artist, one is always



Fig.05

concerned not only about the personality, but the overall shape a person has, and how that shape will read from a great distance. This is something to always consider when sketching. There will be hits and misses, but always think about the overall silhouette and if and how that pose reads to *clearly* describe who that person is, or what their specific action is. The clearer the better! This is why exaggerating the pose is so important and necessary in the animation and entertainment industry.

Sometimes – as with this example of the elderly man (**Fig.05**) – subtleties are more important than a bold action. Knowing when to use what is just as important as the actual drawing itself. In the elderly man you can see he is slightly off kilter and not as sure footed as some of the other characters waiting at the bus stop in this next illustration (**Fig.06**). Generally speaking, the wider the feet are from the center of the body, the sturdier the posture will be due to a greater balance of weight from the center point of the body.

In pose B, we can see the character is leaning

in to see around the corner for the bus that she is so eagerly waiting for. She also is holding her hands behind her back, showing even more of an uncomfortable wait that may cause her to be late for an important function.

In pose C we can see the woman is slightly more aggressive just from her stance. Her posture suggests more of someone “on guard” – her legs are more apart, increasing her center of gravity, giving her a stronger stance.

In pose D we can see this lady is slightly more withdrawn and kept to herself. We can see that by the way she’s enclosed her hands and is crossing her arms. She’s balanced in her stance but ready to move quickly, if need be.

In poses E and F we can see these two are a couple straight out of a Hollywood roadside. Their close proximity suggests they are together. It also shows by their general look. She’s strongly stanced to look good, while he’s more in command and ready for anything that comes his way in an effort to protect her, based upon his widened stance, similar to pose C.

In the following illustration examples, we’ll be approaching more movement-based drawings.

MOVEMENT

By taking the same knowledge from the sketchbook drawings and applying it to life drawings, the sketches will appear much clearer and grasp more of the “spark of life” others are so drawn to, such as the examples (**Fig.07**). Certain situations call for more dynamic, “pushed” poses, while other poses demand a more subtle style of dynamics. For example, the sketchbook pages of the patrons waiting to be picked up from the bus stop show these subtleties. A more dramatic, or a subtle push, can both be accomplished by focusing on the overall silhouette. This will automatically exaggerate the pose and make it far more dynamic than merely copying what you are seeing in front of you. From here, adding the subtleties of what the character or person is thinking will generally push the drawing over the edge and into the “unique” category.

But always remember: be it figure drawing, character design, concept design, film design

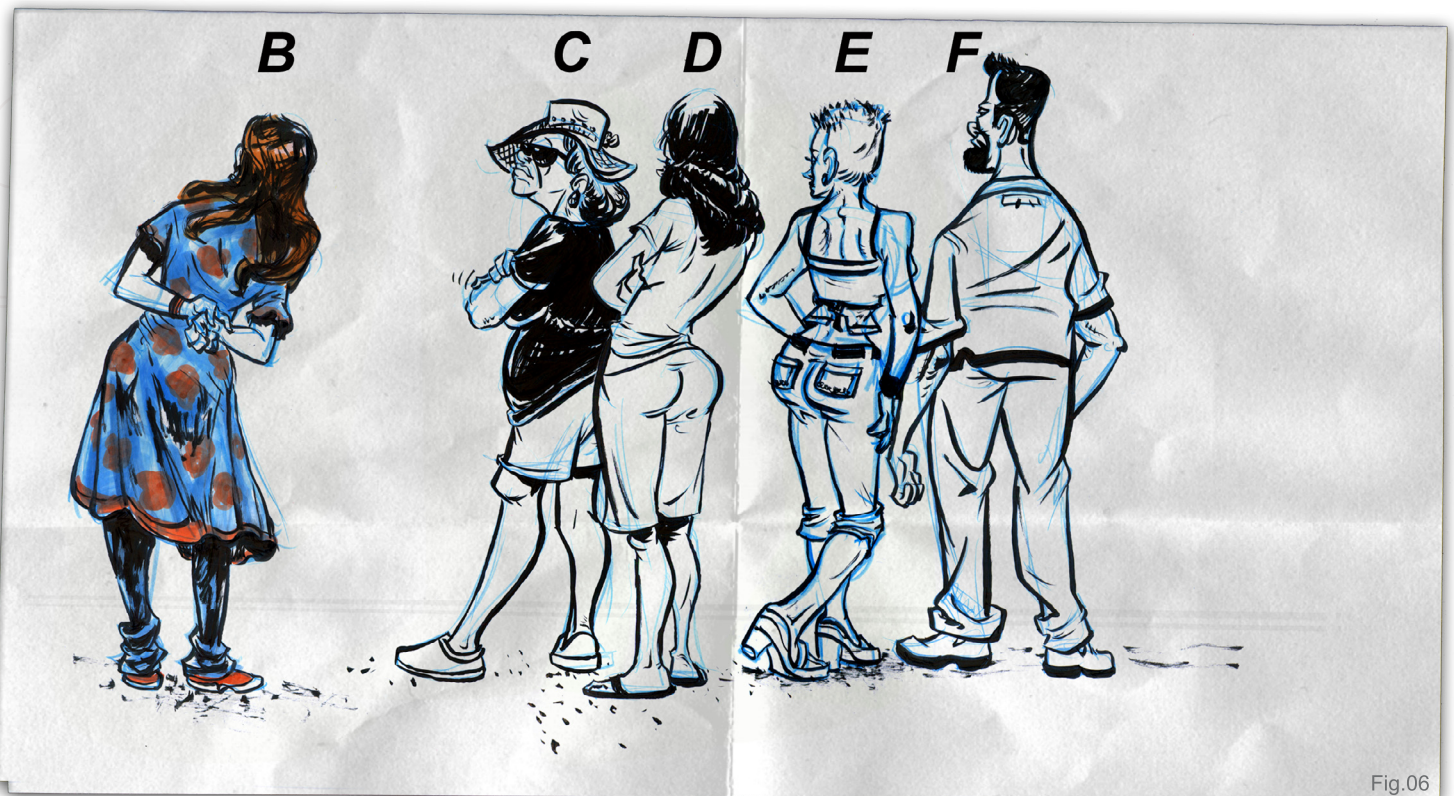
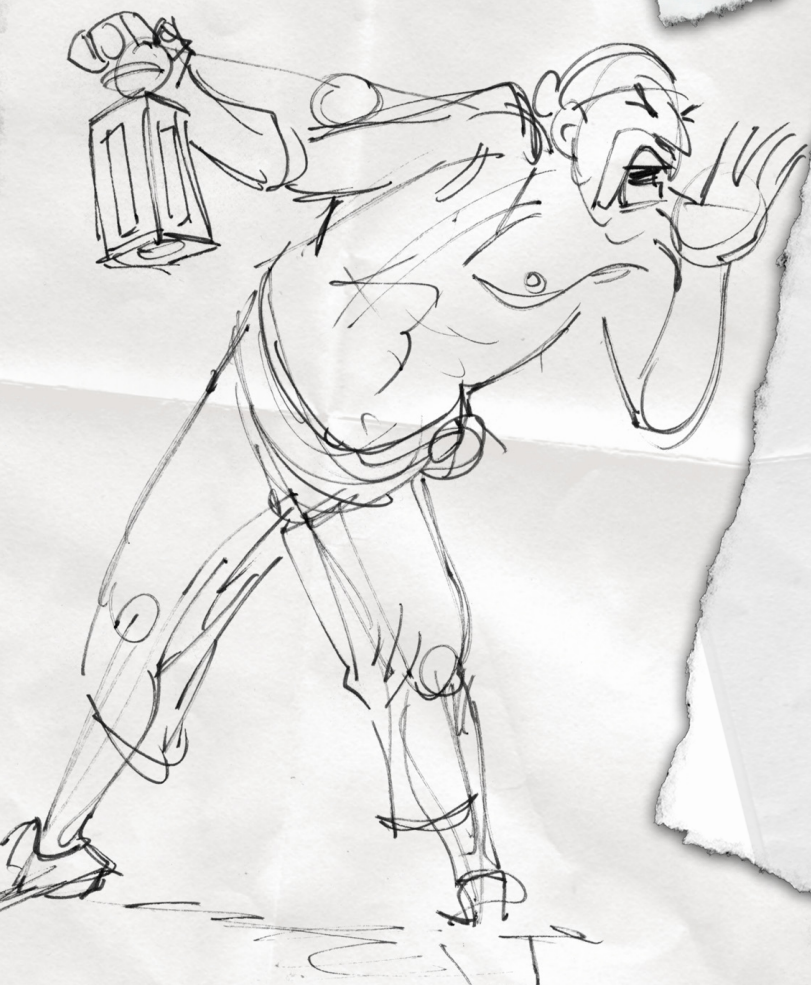


Fig.06





Fig.07



DYNAMIC CHARACTERS Part 4: Dynamic and Exaggerated Poses

or anything in-between, the root of it all is capturing the correct amount of "life" that will be appropriate to the particular project that is being worked on. This is why figure drawing is such an amazing and unending source of inspiration. It's unending because you will be practicing whatever you are interested in experimenting with directly into the challenge of figure drawing itself.

One good rule to always follow is to leave the facial features or expressions last. It's my personal feeling that the entire body language without the face should communicate what the action is in the pose, or poses. It's really the icing on the cake and can be the greatest exclamation mark at the end of a statement. Take a look at some of the sketches here to see some gestural approaches to feeling out the pose, and more importantly, the character that is posing (**Fig.08**).

From the ballerina sketches to here, you can see that pushing the pose into a more dynamic

and exaggerated way will increase the storytelling aspect of a drawing or concept, as well as give you that "spark of life" you are searching for in any piece of artwork. With that being said, this process of gesture drawing is cross-platform – from animation, illustration, film design, storyboarding, concept design, visual development, character design and everything in-between. It's the root of all things. It's the first step and the last adjustment to any amazing illustration and should not be overlooked in an effort to finish a piece for production purposes or otherwise (**Fig.09 – 10**).

Note from the Editor:

Mark McDonnell recently published the book entitled, *The Art and Feel of Making It Real: Gesture Drawing for the Animation and Entertainment Industry*. It is a comprehensive and complete guide to gesture drawing that explains how to design and capture the essence of life, giving anyone from



Fig.09



hobbyist to industry professional the tools to fuel the power of their imagination for production purposes or otherwise.

MARK MCDONNELL

To purchase Mark McDonnell's book or view his artwork please go to:

<http://www.cre8tivemarks.com> (Store section)

<http://markmcdonnell.blogspot.com/>

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Fig.10

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Part 4

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"I CANNOT STRESS ENOUGH HOW
IMPORTANT IT IS FOR ANY PAINTER
TO LEARN TO SEE COLORS, AND
LEARN TO KNOW WHAT HAPPENS
WHEN YOU MIX THEM."

CHAPTER 1 - JULY

Introducing Photoshop's Workspace, Graphics Tablets, Screen Calibration, Color Profiles and the Brush Tool

CHAPTER 2 - AUGUST

Canvas Settings, Scanning Drawings, Swatches, Colour Pickers, Colour Theory, Layers and Custom Brushes!

CHAPTER 3 - SEPTEMBER

Composition Rules, Sketching and Perspective, Understanding Light and Blocking-In.

CHAPTER 4 - OCTOBER

Colouring from Greyscale, Colours beyond Blocking-In, Blending Methods and Using Photos - In the fourth chapter we will learn about colouring a greyscale sketch or painting, how to paint with colours beyond blocking in, including a more in-depth approach to the actual process, different blending methods and the tools to use for this, as well as how to use photos directly in your paintings.

CHAPTER 5 - NOVEMBER

Quick Masks, Using the Wand Tool, Liquify Filter uses, Layer Masks – and Painting!

CHAPTER 6 - DECEMBER

The Final Part: Finishing Touches, Filters, the Unsharpen Mask and Saving your Work

Beginner's Guide to

DIGITAL PAINTING

This Workshop Series will look at, just as the title suggests, all the things that we need to know to get us started with Photoshop – mainly for painting, but also for other things such as matte painting and photo manipulation, which often use the same tools. We will be covering all the technical aspects of the programme, as well as some technical sides of painting that'll help us starting to swing the virtual brush!

CHAPTER 4 - COLOURING FROM GREYSCALE COLOURS BEYOND BLOCKING-IN BLENDING METHODS AND USING PHOTOS

Software Used: Photoshop

INTRODUCTION

This month, let's take a small U-turn and look at another way of starting a painting, as well as at how to color a scanned drawing. We will get back on track afterwards, and continue where we left off, checking out how to really work with colors and make colors work for you, different blending methods, adding things to your painting and changing them around if necessary, and using photos directly in your painting (as often done in matte painting).

FROM IDEA TO REALITY

Color theory, as we saw, can be a very complex, especially when you've not quite got the hang of it and colors still seem like aliens to you; aliens that torture and frustrate you because they simply don't want to work together, no matter what you try. And there goes the painting – a perfectly good one – right out of the window. If only there was a way to do it in a monochromatic color scheme (which most



Fig.01

people find easier to work with as it keeps things quite literally black and white) and then make the colors magically appear...

Well, there is!

PAINTING IN GRAYSCALE

Let's assume you're really good at shading in black and white (like with charcoal or graphite), and would prefer to start your paintings like that because it's easier for you and lets you concentrate purely on what you're painting or drawing, rather than having to keep color theory in mind at the same time. You would do exactly that, using the same brushes and methods we discussed in the last issue, only you'd do it all in black and white.

Note: You can open a new canvas in Grayscale mode, and you can also change your canvas's mode once open from RGB to Grayscale by going to *Edit > Mode > Grayscale*. This setting is not needed to draw or paint in black and white; it reduces the file size. You can of course switch your canvas to Grayscale Mode if you like – this can be reversed at any time in *Edit > Mode*, but if you intend to color your painting, I'd

recommend leaving it as it is on RGB from the start.

Let's have a look at what we've got (Fig.01).

This is simply a desaturated version of the painting we started in the last chapter. To desaturate a color picture (for whatever reason), just go to *Image > Adjustments > Desaturate*. After doing that, you may have to adjust the Levels slightly, as certain color combinations give you a very dull and muddy grey, washed-out appearance.

The painting is of course still in its early stages, but it will get the point across. In essence, you can finish a painting to the tiniest detail in grayscale, and then do what I'm about to show you...

There are in fact several methods to coloring a black and white image; however, I've found this one to be the most adjustable and thus usable one:

Once you've selected your Paintbrush, change the Mode of your brush – you can do that in the options bar, next to the manual Opacity and Flow settings (Fig.02). The modes that I would

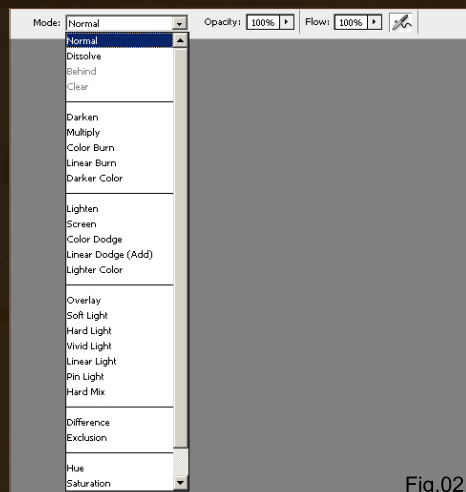


Fig.02

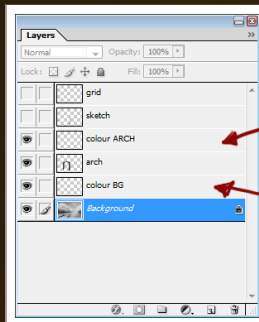
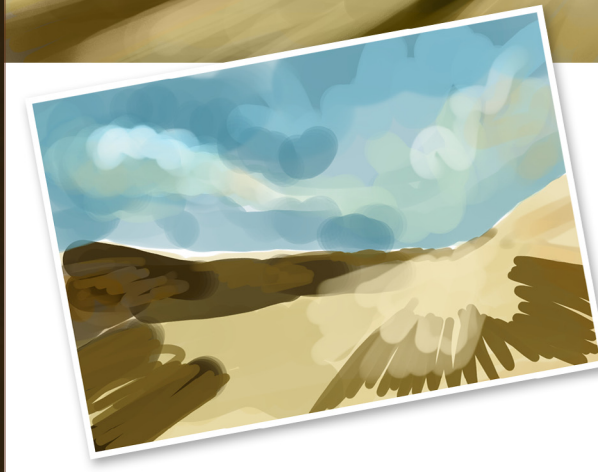


Fig.02a

suggest are Color (gives you the most true-to-reality color – great for the first layer), Multiply (makes colors darker), Overlay (makes dark colors darker and light ones lighter, while also making them more intense), and Screen (makes colors very bright).

This only works if you do not add additional layers to your painting, but paint the color directly onto your existing layers. If you want to add a new layer to your painting for this, you need to set the new layer's mode to Color, rather than the brush's! If you already have several layers in your image, add a new layer on top of each one of those layers if you want to keep the layers intact. Simply select a layer, and then add a new one. It will automatically be added on top of the selected layer (Fig.02a).

Working with layers here makes it a little more complicated, but might be useful if you think you'd rather play it safe.



The actual colour layers

Fig.03

So you've got your brush – a biggish, Hard Round one would be good, you've got your Brush Mode set to Color, and you've added your new layer(s). Now choose your colors and paint.

If you're using layers, make sure to keep them separate, as in, don't paint the blue of the sky on the layer that was added on top of the arch, for example (Fig.03).



Fig.03a

If you're using layers for the coloring, be careful not to draw over things we want to color on a different layer. In essence, this is a bit like a grown-up coloring book exercise: don't go over the lines! This is easier when not using extra layers, as you can apply the Lock Transparent Pixels function in your Layers Palette for your layers (like the arch).

Because of the monochrome painting shining through the color layers, there is no need to really think about shadows and highlights at this point. To add some darker or lighter color variations, simply switch your Brush Mode

to Multiply, Overlay or Screen, and continue painting, lowering the Opacity of your brush at your leisure. This, again, doesn't work when using extra layers and you'll have to add even more layers with their modes set to Multiply, Overlay or Screen (**Fig.03a**).

If you're not happy with the overall color variations, highlights and shadows that you can achieve with this method, you can just add another layer right on top of all your other layers, switch the Brush Mode to Normal, and paint over the areas you want to adjust (**Fig.03b**). You can also merge each of the grayscale layers with its color counterpart, and then continue painting in color in Normal Mode (with or without additional layers).

This same method can be used with color scanned drawings, especially if you would like to keep the line art. You can also do the following with scanned drawings – and this is great if you want to just use the drawing as a sketch that won't be seen in the final picture:

Duplicate the Background Layer by going to Layers > Duplicate Layer – you should now have two layers on your canvas: the Background layer and a layer called Background Copy (**Fig.04**). Now select the Background layer again, go to Select > All, and then go to Edit > Clear. This will clear the Background layer of the drawing and instead fill it with whatever color you have set as your background color (**Fig.04a**). Deselect the canvas (Select > Deselect). Next, select the Background Copy layer again in your Layers Palette,



Fig.03b

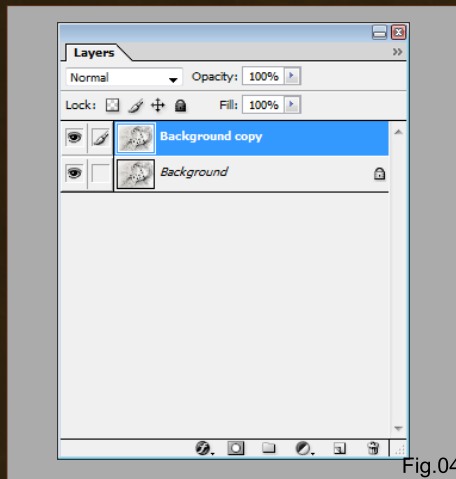


Fig.04

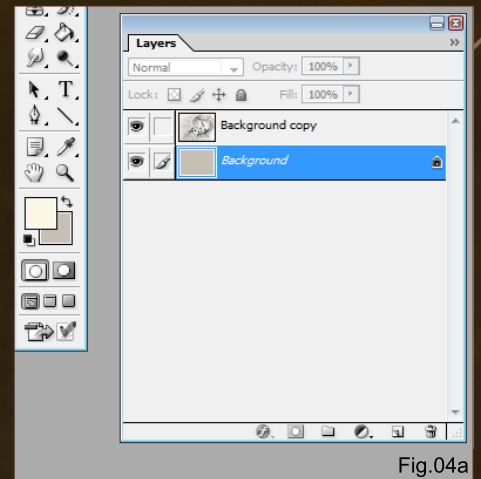


Fig.04a

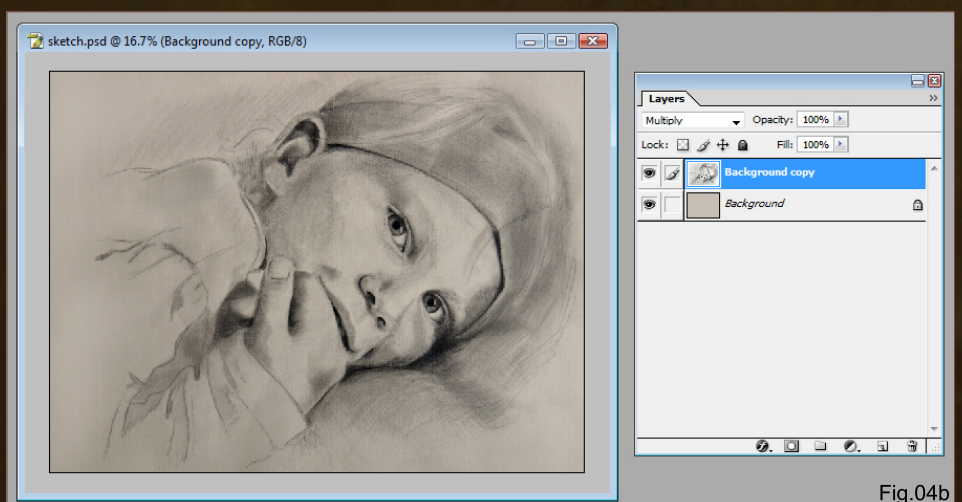


Fig.04b



Fig.04c

and set it to Multiply in the dropdown menu. You should now be able to see through your drawing onto the background (**Fig.04b**).

Now you can paint beneath the scanned drawing without losing it, add layers beneath it

if you want to, and generally do anything you'd normally do with any other digitally created layer (**Fig.04c**).

With this covered, let's head back to where we left off last month.

PAINTING WITH COLORS

Believe me when I say that I hated painting with colors for quite some time. I just couldn't make them work for me; couldn't get things to look right; couldn't get them to look real, radiant, iridescent ... Everything had about as much flair as a dull plastic tub!

In the first stages of your painting, that is OK. You want to lay down the basic colors, or even the colors that will be a good base to shine through the ones you later want to add. But at some point, you will have to add color variations, lest you want to end up with the aforementioned plastic tub look, which seems to be a common thing and is due to just choosing lighter and darker shades from the same hue – or worse even, black and white for shadows and highlights.

So, what's the best way to address that? – Yes, you do need an eye for colors, and be it just an eye that can tell which two different blues work together, and which don't. Without that, it will be very hard to learn working with colors, as you can only learn so much.

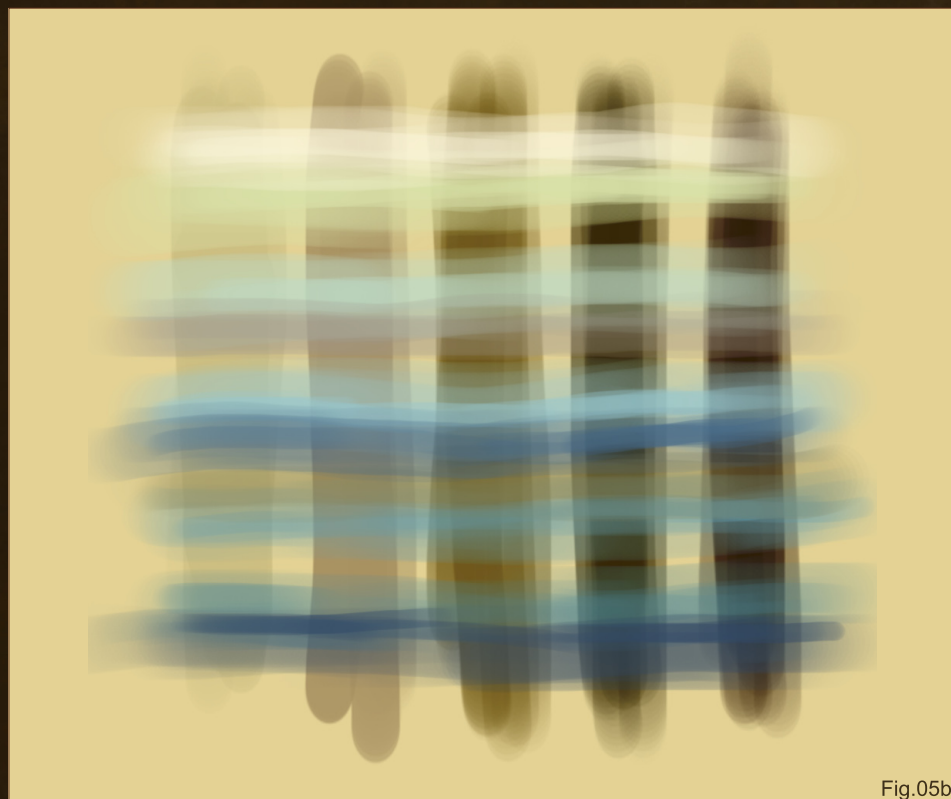


A good way to choose further colors for your painting is to pick the main colors off the painting and paint them in blobs or stripes on a new, small canvas. It works best if you have the colors going from light to dark, or dark to light (Fig.05). You may have done this already before you started your painting, and if you have, just open that little image of colors and see where we are going with this.

In this case we have a limited color palette, which is a bit harder to get to look iridescent simply for the lack of "available" colors. Imagine it like having only a set number of paint tubs available; there is only so much you can do



with them. The first thing you can do is mix the existing colors to get new hues and shades. Try this by using your Paintbrush and at low Opacity paint with one color over the others (Fig.05a). You may have noticed this effect when you were blocking in your painting – make use of it and use the colors that appear by picking them off the canvas. You can also add some similar hues into the mix, broadening the palette while still retaining a limited one (Fig.05b). You can do this with any color combination, and see if it works. For fun, you can also pick two random colors, and try and see if you can make them "link" by adding the needed colors in between the two. You can get some really wild but working color schemes that way.



As said before, if it helps you, use references for colors as well, like photos of sky and clouds, deserts and stone structures – whatever you need. Try to avoid picking the colors directly off the photos, though. Sure, it would be easy enough and spare you having to look for the right colors yourself, but if you do that, you'll never learn to do it by yourself. Your eyes will never adjust to seeing colors for what they really are, and where they appear – often in the most unlikely places. Also, zoom in on a photograph on your computer to 300 or 400%. You'll see that what looked like skin color when zoomed out will suddenly be a myriad of different colored pixels – the different colors that make up the skin color in that small part of the photo. If you were to pick a color from the photo,

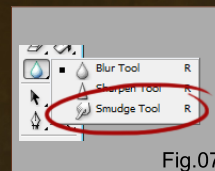
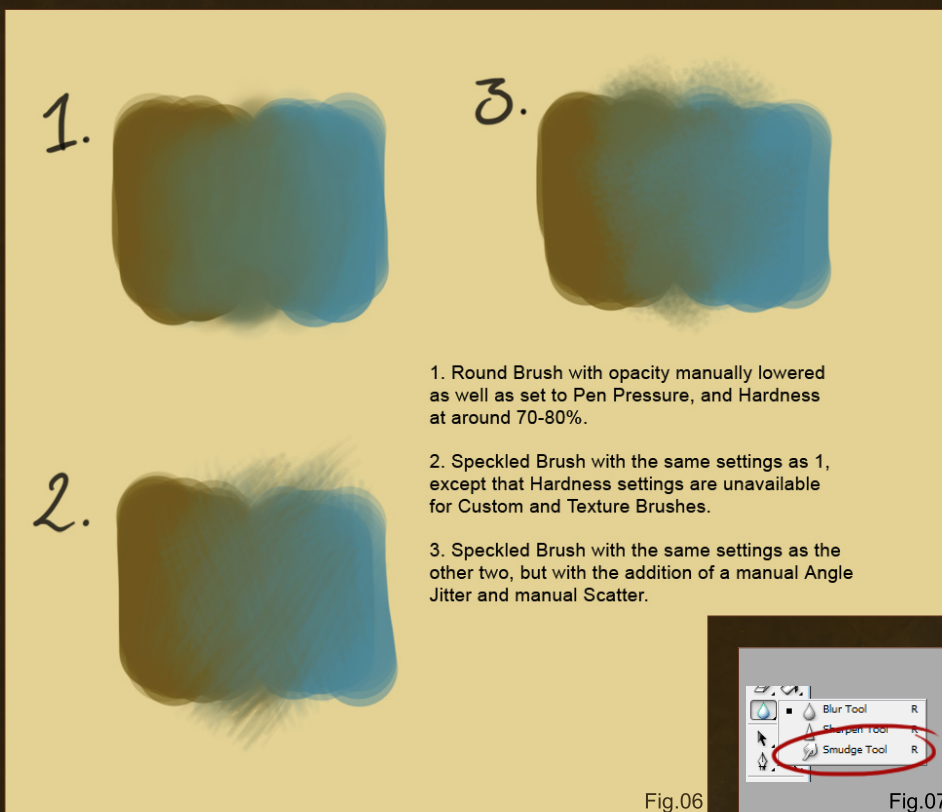
you'd pick one of the many, and later wonder why it still doesn't look quite right, and often still very flat.

I cannot stress enough how important it is for any painter to learn to see colors, and learn to know what happens when you mix them. Of course, this is a much more vital part in traditional art than it is in digital, but still saves you a lot of trial and error when painting on the computer. It may take some time, but it's worth it. Promise! Just think about it: how great would it be to be able to just paint something, without having to look at references or using help to choose your colors?

So let's get back to the painting once again, and continue refining it, adding more colors and cleaning up some of the mess we've made.

I personally like to mainly stick to the round Paintbrush at this stage still, occasionally using some custom brushes to achieve a good amount of texture foundation, with lowered Opacity, as well as having the brush's Opacity Jitter set to Pen Pressure. I just like the wash effect I can achieve with these settings, layering the colors and giving the whole image a more translucent look. If this is not for you, and you prefer solid colors, go ahead! That's great, too.

In both cases, you may want to learn how to blend the colors without making them all muddy and having your shapes lose form – something that easily happens if you blend too vigorously; things become blurry and undefined.

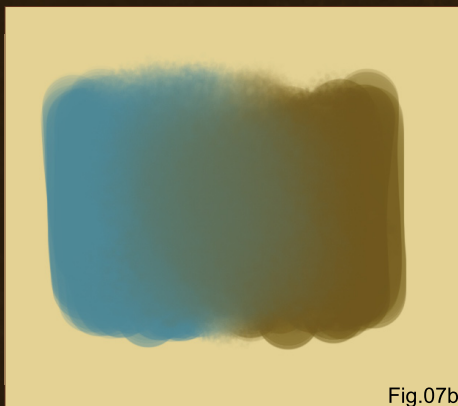
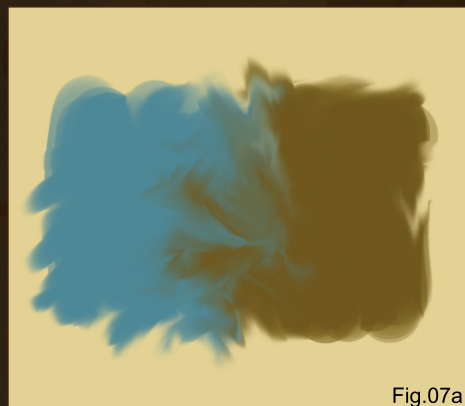


You can either blend with your brush as previously shown, simply by lowering the Opacity sufficiently, and maybe even making the brush a little bit softer. Not too soft though, as otherwise you'd again end up with blurred mud. You can also change your Brush Tip to a textured brush, or a speckled one, to avoid making it too smooth. Also, rather than just blending with the two colors you want to blend, pick some shades from the canvas that have already been blended – it will give you a better transition (Fig.06).

Another way to blend would be to use the Smudge Tool, which you can find under the

Blur Tool (Fig.07). Now, this tool has a very bad reputation – I personally hate it with a passion when it's overused, and overused it is more often than not – but it can do some good, too. When used with the wrong (or should I say "default"?) settings, it simply pushes the paint around on the canvas, creating something akin to a smudgy batik effect (Fig.07a). Sure, there are some things this is good for, like certain types of clouds, but to make it blend colors properly, we need to change the settings as well as the Brush Tip it uses. I like to use a speckled tip, or otherwise textured and ragged. Next, I apply the following Brush Settings:

The Shape Dynamics are manually set to Angle Jitter with the slider, while all other Shape Dynamics options are off. Scattering is also manually adjusted – to as little or much as I want or need to get a certain result, so play around with this – and Other Dynamics is set to Pen Pressure. These settings give you a result that is much more appealing, while at the same time adding some texture to your work (Fig.07b).



To show some of the process, here are two screen recordings I made while working on the next stage of the painting. They show roughly 40 minutes of work each, shown at 6x their original speed, as this shows the progress much better and also clamps down on file size (**Movie.01 – 02**).

REVIEWING AND MAKING ADJUSTMENTS

After some hours of work, we're ready to review what we've done, in a manner of speaking (**Fig.08**). First of all, I want to adjust the Levels of the painting, as I realize the colors don't quite have the impact I want them to have. Yet! You don't have to do this now, or at all, or can do it whenever you like – the choice is yours.

At this point, it may be a good idea to flip the canvas horizontally, to give you a fresh view on things. This is most important for portraits or general figure paintings, but also helpful for landscapes and cityscapes, too. It can show you where your elements may need some adjustment. As for the composition, this usually works just one way, not the other, as more often than not a composition was put together in a specific way to draw the viewer's eye to certain elements within the painting. Therefore, when



Fig.08



Fig.08b



Movie.01



Movie.02

flipped, the composition is best left alone. To flip (mirror) the canvas, simply go to Image > Rotate Canvas > Flip Canvas Horizontal; depending on your computer and image size, this may take a moment.

I decide to resize the arch to make it a bit bigger. I do this by selecting the layer it's on,

and then go to Edit > Free Transform. This will make a box appear around the arch, much like the box we know from the Cropping Tool (**Fig.08a**). To keep the aspect ratio of your arch – meaning that it will resize all sides the same way – you need to click the little Link icon between the Height and Width in your options bar (**Fig.08b**). Now you can either click inside

the Height or Width field and enter a percentage manually, or use your arrow keys to up or down the percentage (Fig.08c). Or, simply click the corners of the box and pull or push them to the desired size (Fig.08d).

You can also push and pull on the sides, but this messes with the aspect ratio of the item to be resized. You can also rotate the selection by clicking outside of the corners and turning the box – just like with the Crop Tool. Here you can also adjust the perspective of objects, in case you need to. So it's handy to have the perspective grid layer visible while doing this. You can switch between different Transform Modes while transforming (just go into Edit > Transform to do that). Once you're happy with what you've got, click the tick mark in the options bar, or double-click outside your canvas to apply the transformation.

Flip the canvas back to its original state.

If you do something like this to an object that casts shadows, those shadows will have to be adjusted accordingly. In my case, the shadows of the arch are painted on the background, which means I either need to re-paint them, or simply transform them, too. To do this, I select them (well, one at a time) with the Lasso Tool (Fig.08e) by drawing a nice big circle around them

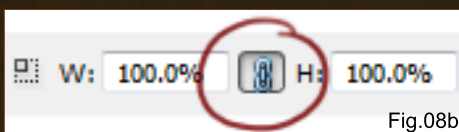


Fig.08b

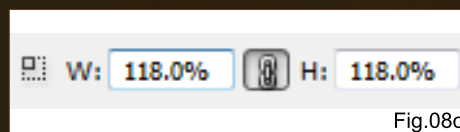


Fig.08c



Fig.08d

– you don't just want to select the shadows themselves, but some of the sand as well. Then we go to Edit > Copy, or simply press Ctrl + C, to copy the selection. Then we paste it by either going to Edit > Paste, or by pressing Ctrl + V. This will paste the selection in the same spot you selected it from. Now you can move and transform it the same way as any layer.

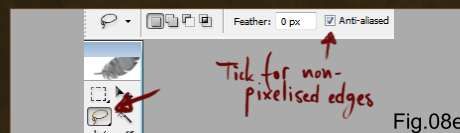


Fig.08e

Sometimes the perspective needs to be changed, and this can be done with either Edit > Transform > Perspective, or Edit > Transform > Skew. Afterwards, erase the hard edges that may be visible of the selection to blend it with the rest, and if necessary paint a little over them where it doesn't quite work. Now go into your Layers Palette and merge the selections with the Background Layer (or whatever layer they should be merged with).

Looking at it a bit longer (in fact stepping away from it for a night), I feel that the whole picture is too open. Sure, it works, but not for what I have in mind. Too much sky, not enough looming rock faces. So I add to them by simply painting over the background. The sky itself needs to be darker, too, and so I paint over that, as well. After an hour of adjustment, we have what you see in Fig.08f.



Fig.08f



Fig.09

Note: By the way, if you are getting tired of zooming in and out all the time, especially when working on a small area to see what it looks like as a whole, you can try this little trick: Go to Window > Arrange > New Window for... It will open your painting a second time in a new window – this is not a copy, but a clone. If you paint on one, the same brushstrokes will simultaneously appear on the other. Closing one closes the other. So be careful! In any case, you can zoom out of one of your painting windows now, while zooming in on the one you're working on, and see what effect your efforts have on the one you zoomed out. It's pretty cool!

Now, landscapes are nice to look at, but in this one, you may have already noticed that something is definitely missing; something to grab your attention and make you want to look at it more closely.

As mentioned at some point in the last workshop, I consciously laid out the landscape like this, as I have plans, namely to add a figure

into the painting. And if you remember the overlaid Fibonacci Spiral, you will already know where I want the figure to be, and there really is no other place to put one but sitting on top of the arch.

ADDING A CHARACTER

So, let's add another layer to the painting to sketch the figure. I want it to be a girl, mainly because girls get away with wearing dresses – long flowing dresses at that – which is exactly what I want. If you need references for this, feel free to use them. I had my husband take some photos of me to help me with the pose, as I generally like to have a point of reference for poses I've not drawn before (foreshortening and perspective can be a real pain when it comes to people). Please forgive me for not showing the photos, I'd just like to retain a little bit of dignity...

In any case, just as before, we'll grab the round Paintbrush and sketch the figure on the new layer (Fig.09). I've changed the sketch to white

simply for the benefit of seeing it better here, but I will have it in black once I start working on the colors. You can see I let the dress trail around the arch and off into the distance, which will help draw the viewer's eye from the figure and arch into the distance, to take in the entire scene. It is not necessary to do this, as other elements (or a different composition) can achieve the same thing.

To paint the girl, we add more layers beneath the sketch layer – one beneath the arch layer for the girl and the parts of the dress that are behind the arch, and another one above the arch layer for the dress tendrils – and proceed as we did before with the Hard Round Paintbrush to block in the first few colors.

Here, again, you can choose your color palette before starting to paint. At the first try, I had given her a red/orange/pink dress, because usually this pops the color scheme quite nicely, but in this case it was too much, too distracting,

and I went with white instead. Now, white is one of those colors – even though it strictly speaking is not a color – that can be hard to get right. Using pure white never works other than for gleaming, punctuated highlights, and even then has to be used with care. To get a white that works well, mix in some surrounding colors of the painting, which in this case is browns and ochre greens, and some blues as well. Her skin tone will mainly be different shades of browns, with some yellow and possibly purple thrown in for good measure (**Movie.03**).

Something you may want to bear in mind when painting people – or objects with a curved surface – is to adjust your brushstrokes to those curves. Rather than making straight strokes, try and follow the curve of an arm or jaw line or fabric fold. It will instantly add form to it.

REVIEWING THE PAINTING ONCE MORE

We are at a stage now where we can once again review the painting. To get to this stage may take you anything from several hours to several days, depending on your practice.

And it takes just that: practice. If you feel annoyed that you can only work at a slow speed, keep at it, practice, and you will get faster the more intuitive the work becomes. Just don't give up. If you feel yourself getting tired of working on the same painting for days or even weeks, maybe start another one, and when you get tired of that, go back to the one you were working on previously. Find ways to make it interesting, but try and finish your work, as only then you can properly see how much you've learned from one painting to the next. Besides, it feels great to look at a finished painting and be able to say, "I did that!"

While looking the painting over, I still feel something isn't quite right yet, and after stepping away from it for a few hours (always a good thing to do when you feel stuck – go grab a coffee with a friend, or cook or clean) I



Movie.03



Fig.10

realize that it's still the colors that seem a tad too cheerful for my taste, or rather, the purpose of the painting. So I adjust them once more, and also adjust the crop of the scene, which gives me what you see in **Fig.10**.

Note: For details and small things in paintings, using the round Paintbrush with Size Jitter, as well as Opacity Jitter switched to Pen Pressure, is very handy. Sufficiently reducing the Opacity and Flow manually is also helpful, as it will save

you blending too much with the Smudge Tool. I like seeing the texture of brushstrokes, as this gives a painting personality, and with it, a distinct style. Your style!

THE "YUCKY STAGE"

We are far from finished, but this shouldn't deter us. The point the painting is at right now I call the "yucky stage". Everything is there and discernable, but looks kind of crappy. I greatly dislike that stage, because it is so easy to just



Fig.11

give up here and say that it's not worth it. It's frustrating and annoying. You had this great vision in your head, but what you've done so far simply doesn't match up.

Well, as said, we're not done yet. It's cool to change things as you go along, and it's also great to stick to what you've started with. Sometimes paintings need to develop as they are being worked on – and that appears to be the case here. I certainly didn't plan to make that many overhauls, especially not for a workshop, seeing that it can be a bit confusing. Alas, here we are. Maybe it's not all that bad after all, as it shows how versatile Photoshop can be.

This stage is also the one where you can consider using photos in your work. Why now, and not later, is simple: later, it will be quite



Fig.12

hard to work them properly into your painting, or so I found out the first time I did it. (This is the second time, in case you wonder!) Any earlier than this, and there may not be enough definition to a painting yet to see if or how something may work out.

ADDING A SKY PHOTO

I'm not a *matte painter* and simply haven't got the expertise to properly work a photo into a painting. Also, it doesn't work with my style. These are things to consider when considering working with photos, or not. So I will simply

use a photo of storm clouds I took recently (Fig.11) to add some more interest to the sky, and maybe work out some cloud formations and depth that way.

Bear in mind that this is something that can also be done by just adding various gradients or layers with different colors painted on them to the picture. However, I was asked to demonstrate adding a photo, so here we go: We open the photo we want to use. I already know I want it turned so it's upside down, so I do that right now (Image > Rotate Canvas > 180°). If you don't know yet, that's fine, because you can do that once it's on the painting.

Using the Move Tool, move it over to the painting. In this case, the best thing to do is to put it over the Background (Fig.12). This whole thing would be really easy if I had painted the cliffs on a separate layer, as I could have simply placed the photo between the background and the cliffs, and thus concealing the edges of the photo without much work. However, I only have a background that has everything on it.

To see what I am doing in the next step, I adjust the Mode of the photo layer in the Layers Palette – usually Overlay or Soft Light works



Fig.12a




Fig.12b

a treat – until I can see through it onto the background of the painting. If necessary we can also lower the Opacity a bit.

We can now resize the photo to fit onto the part of the painting we want it on, and we do this by going to Edit > Free Transform. Being able to see through the photo helps me here to see where the cliff edges are, and I need to place and resize the photo so the trees will not be visible later (Fig.12a).

Once I am happy with the placement, I apply the transformation. And now the fun starts!

Keeping the opacity semi-transparent, we pick the Eraser Tool , choose a round and 70% hard Paintbrush, set its Opacity and Flow to Pen Pressure, but leave the Size Jitter switched off. We now can erase all the parts of the photo that go over the cliff edges, and also what sticks out over the horizon line.

Having the bottom edge of the photo exactly touch the horizon line gives the impression that it's pasted on, which is not desirable. You want the photo to blend in with the surroundings.

Zoom in to erase near the edges of things, if you need or want to do that. I choose to keep parts of the photo overlapping with the cliffs, as it lets the colors from the photo spill over to the rocks (Fig.12b). It doesn't matter if it's not all that neat, as everything can be blended in later with the help of the Smudge Tool, as well as being overpainted.

Play around with the settings here, as well as with the colors and lightness/darkness using Variations or Levels – it's amazing how these can affect the outcome! In this case, I decide to duplicate the later and desaturate it. The desaturated layer I set to Normal Mode with 40% Opacity, while the original layer stays on Soft Light, but with only 87% Opacity. I then

move the desaturated layer beneath the Soft Light layer (Fig.12c). Now we can see we still have some erasing to do, but mainly for the desaturated layer, as I still want the Soft Light layer to overlap.

As the original sky is shining through considerably, I smooth it out with a color I pick from the original sky, so the photo cloud formations are more visible. You can make those pop out even more by adding some



Fig.12c

lighter colors where the clouds of the photos are – on the background layer, *not* on the photo (Fig.12d).

Note: As photos often have some kind of grain to them, especially when resized, they need to be edited to blend into a painting better. What I've found is that the Median Filter is very useful for this. You can find it under Filters > Noise > Median. Use a low setting to retain shapes, but get rid of the grain. It will give the photo a somewhat painted and slightly smudgy look. Depending on what you want or need, it can be left as is, or overpainted to give it some more painted definition.

Happy with the result, at least for now, we can choose to leave the layers as they are, or – if you find it slows down Photoshop because the image is getting too big because of all the layers – we can merge them with the background. For the moment, I decide not to merge them, but probably will once I want to work more on the background and overpaint bits and pieces here and there in the sky. For now though, we can turn our attention back to the girl.

BACK TO THE CHARACTER

The dress still needs some work, and as the colors of the overall picture have changed, we should work some of those colors into the girl's dress as well – namely the seemingly green-turquoise tint we have floating around all over the place (Fig.13).

Pick it from the canvas, and add it in some selected spots. It looks pretty neat to see it popping up here and there, and it also ties everything together (Fig.13a).

With our color palette adjusted, let's smooth out the fabric tendrils and folds of the dress, though not too much, as we want to keep some kind of texture in there. Very smooth fabric often looks plastic, and simply wouldn't



Fig.12d



Fig.13



Fig.13a



Fig.13b

work here. Even when painting shiny silk – this one I imagine to be soft cotton or maybe raw chiffon – a certain amount of texture has to be retained to make it believable, and to avoid it looking plastic. We do the same with some of the cliffs in the background, to get rid of the very obvious brush marks that are telltale signs of "I

used a speckled brush in Photoshop!" Hints of brushstrokes are cool; obvious unrendered ones are not, when a painting is overall smoothly rendered (Fig.13b).

So what's next? I'd say we just keep painting for now. We've covered all the things we need

to know about building up an image, and to go on to the next step, our picture needs to be as refined as you want it to be. Therefore, I'll finish this installment off with a few screenshots of the progress the image is making (Fig.14a – d).

IN CLOSURE

This certainly was a lot to take in all in one go, but I hope you've enjoyed seeing a painting take shape – in pictures and videos – and learnt a bit about what can be done (and undone) when something doesn't quite work out from the start.

The next chapter will bring us closer to finalizing a painting, and with it, we'll be looking at some nifty tools that come in very useful for all sorts of things, such as the Quick Mask, Extraction and Liquify Tools and Filters. We'll also be learning about using **custom photo texture brushes** in our work to give it that extra little kick!



Fig.14a



Fig.14b

And talking of brushes, you can download the small set I have made for this chapter with some of the brushes I used this time around (click on the **Free Resources** icon). I'm sure you can find a use for them, too!

NYKOLAI ALEKSANDER

For more from this artist visit

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Fig.14c



Fig.14d

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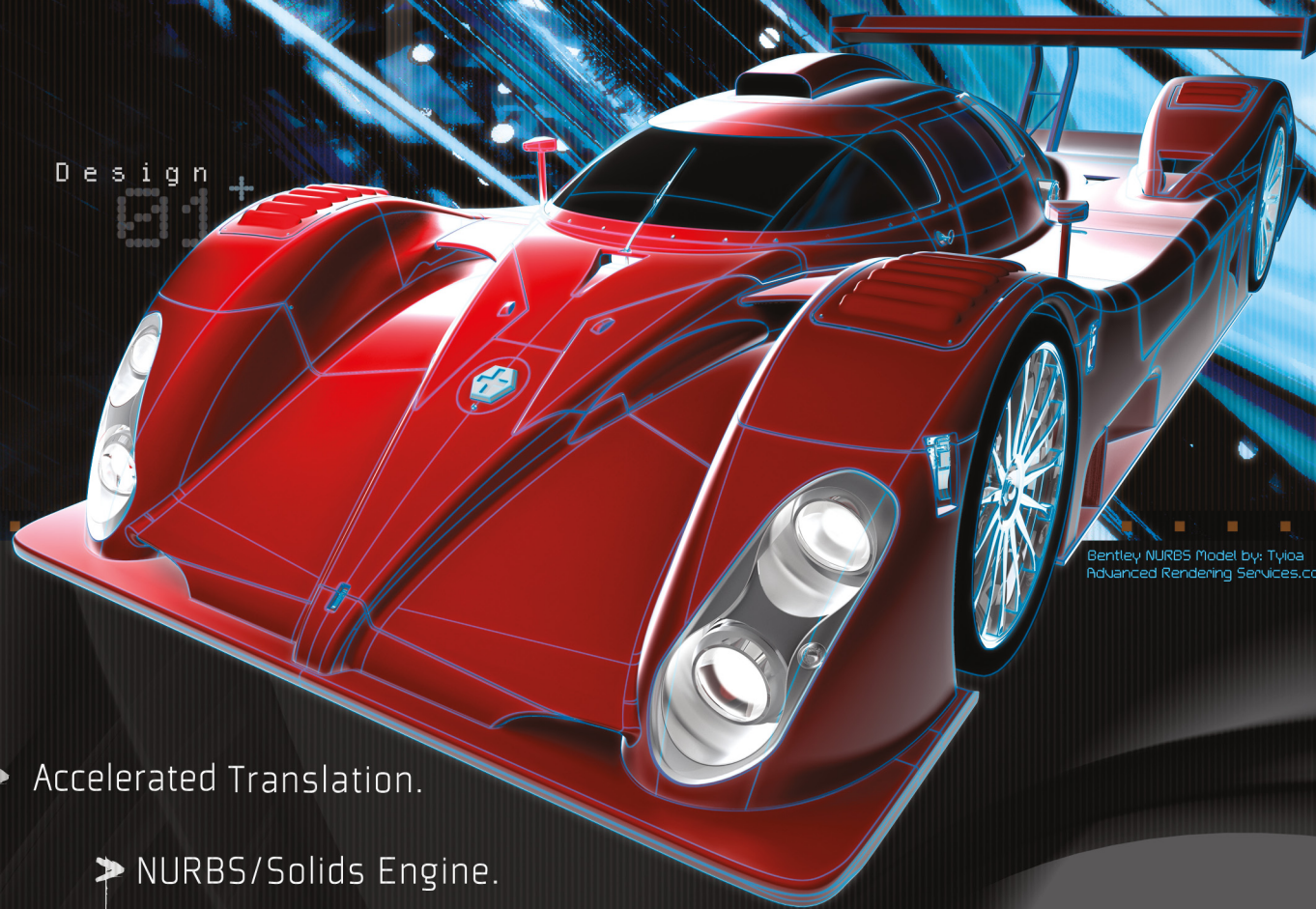
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"I'M CONVINCED THAT
AN INTERESTING AND
DYNAMIC COMPOSITION
CONTRIBUTES TOWARDS
30% OF THE SUCCESS OF
AN IMAGE!"

IMP vs ANGEL WARRIOR

MAKING OF BY OLEG MATSOKIN

MAKING OF 'IMP VS ANGEL-WARRIOR'

Software Used: Photoshop

How many representations of the fight between good and evil do you think have already been created? To add to the vast range of interpretations of this eternal theme, I chose to depict the two opposing forces through an example of two very specific characters – an imp and an angel-warrior. I'd like to walk you through the creation process of this particular artwork with a detailed description of my workflow. So here we go!

CONCEPT

The concept of the image is the fight between those two all-time enemies: good and evil; dark and light; order and chaos. On one side is the imp, and on the other is angel-warrior. I didn't want to show the distinct advantage or winning stroke of one of the characters (although the good character is of course expected to win the fight), so I chose to feature the characters in-flight, approaching each other with aggressive poses. They are depicted in that crucial moment, just a second before the battle begins.

SKETCHING

My choice of canvas for this image was A3 at 300 dpi – a good format for printing which also gives you the opportunity to pay more attention to the details. I cropped the landscape canvas slightly to make more of a square shape, and created a transparent layer over the white background on which to use my favorite standard brush (which I use in my work most of the time) (Fig.01).

"A GOOD AND SOLID DRAWING ADDS ANOTHER 30% TO THE SUCCESS OF AN IMAGE!"

I normally start a new piece by establishing the composition. I'm convinced that an interesting

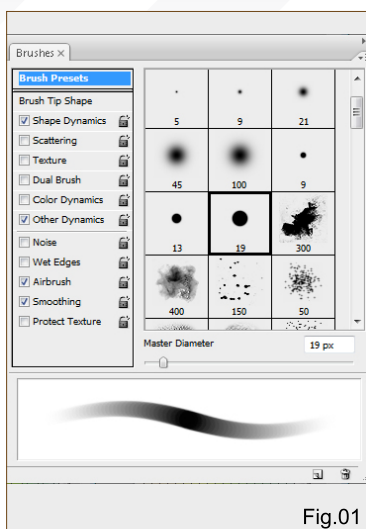


Fig.01

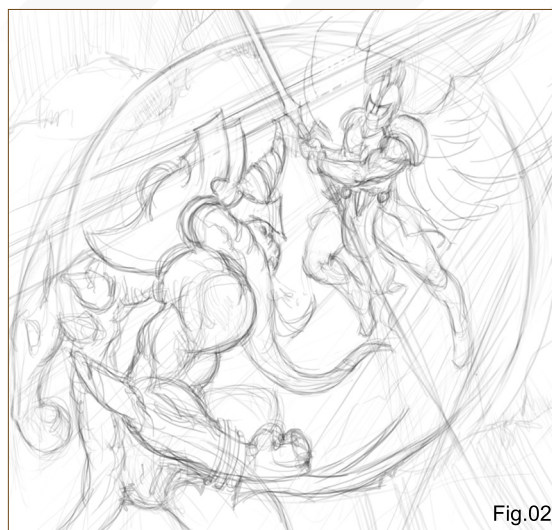


Fig.02

and dynamic composition contributes towards 30% of the success of an image! So I started by sketching the motion and direction of the characters, forming the composition into a circle. The picture was divided into two planes: the imp in the foreground, and the angel in the background (Fig.02).

The composition is not exactly ordinary, because the viewers become witnesses of the fight by looking at the battle scene over the imp's shoulder, even though they're not supposed to side with the dark force. The hand of the imp in the foreground is a point of entry

into the composition and therefore it had to be the most detailed and neatly drawn. Then I made a sketch of figures in motion.

With the initial sketch and composition worked out, I continued by drawing the figures and their costume details more accurately. At this stage I tried to pay more attention to the anatomy, elements of the costumes, and accessories, as it's always much easier to change the motion, perspective or any other elements in a sketch than to make alterations later on when working in color. A good and solid drawing adds another 30% to the success of an image (Fig.03)!



Fig.03

COLOR!

Under the layer with the drawing I created a new layer for working with color. At this stage I used texture brushes a lot (Fig.04); they helped make the background look more picturesque. The major idea for color solution in this image was to emphasize the conflict of opposites – something solemn, reddish-brown at the bottom, and something light and somewhat cool on top. I wanted to make the picture quite dark in order to be able to depict the glowing, magical wings of the angel-warrior. This is a simple technique to make objects glow: keep the surroundings dark. I then added highlights to the imp's contour to show the light emitting from the angel's wings (Fig.05).

DETAILS

At this stage I decided on the colors of the imp and angel-warrior themselves, and sorted out the tone of the entire image. The imp was given his red, devilish skin color and bronze armor,

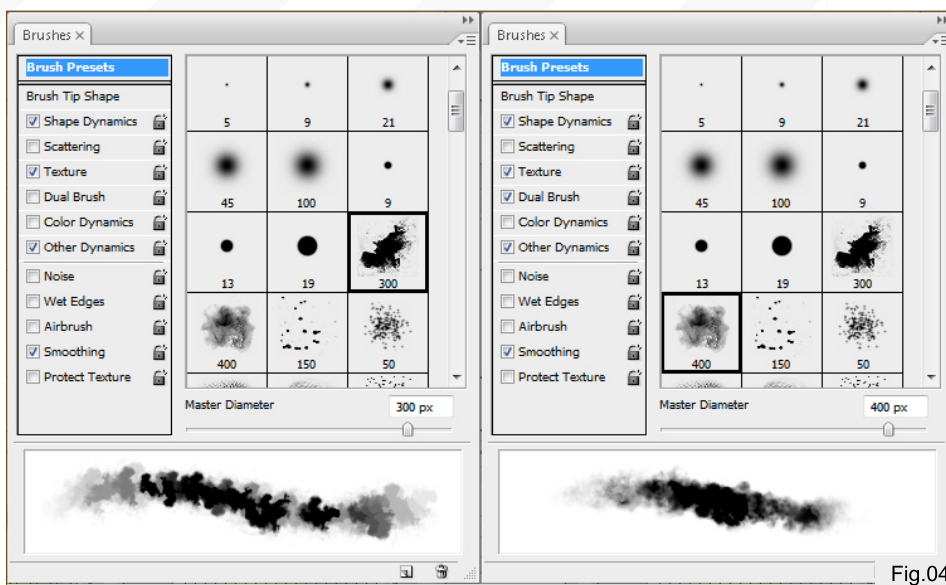


Fig.04

and the angel-warrior received some metallic armor. At the same time I decided to alter the imp's hand nearest the viewer, as a hand with claws looks much more dynamic and frightening than a clenched fist. The angel-warrior's figure grows darker against the bright glowing wings behind him. The angel-warrior dominates and



Fig.05

"SKILLFULLY ARRANGING THE TONES AND MAKING HARMONIOUS COLOR CHOICES, YOU WILL GO ANOTHER 20% TO MAKING A SUCCESSFUL IMAGE."



Fig.06

makes the focal point of the entire composition; the imp's figure also leads the viewer's eye to the angel.

As well as the warm yellow light which the angel's magic wings are shedding, I also added some cool light-blue highlights from the sky to the back of the imp and on his helmet. I did this to add a cool accent to contrast the general warm feeling of the piece. With dynamic, diagonal strokes I added some blue sky highlights behind the angel, emphasizing the initial lines of the composition and the idea of confrontation. By skillfully arranging the tones and making harmonious color choices, you will go another 20% to making a successful image (Fig.06).

REFINING

In the previous stages I was working with color under the drawing layer, but here I added a new layer on top and gradually started refining



Fig.07

the image, getting rid of the pencil lines from the sketch. This stage was quite simple, and contrary to the traditional principles of composition with regards to planning, detailing and development levels, I decided to go ahead and detail the angel-warrior in the distant view. I did this because the angel is just as significant as the imp in the story of the image.

The chainmail on the angel's armor wasn't painted, but was a photo, altered to get the required form with the help of Free Transform. I then painted some individual chain links on top

of it, to make it look handpainted. I worked the angel's magical wings in a similar way: I found some pictures of smoke in my library, altered their form, and applied them over the image as a new layer. I set the blending mode for the layer to Overlay, and in return I received those fiery flashes (Fig.07).

THE FINAL 20%

The final 20% lies in the skill to complete the art; not just to leave it as it is, but to complete it logically, to lay emphasis on the nuances that the viewer should see and to neutralize those

which are less important, as well as adding some effects – highlights, overtones, “contre-jour”, etc.

I started with the imp in the foreground. I used a stone texture which I placed on a layer over the horns, the bone growths on the back and arms, and on the helmet and blades. I set the blending mode for the texture layer to Overlay, this way I achieved a more complex and interesting surface as the texture gave me the sense of material. I drew some cracks, scratches and highlights onto the helmet, and then took a

texture brush and applied several brushstrokes to the imp's skin, adding a liveliness and roughness to it (Fig.08). I also added some highlights and a glow to the contour of the imp's figure; the arm which is far from the viewer was highlighted with the cool overtone, which looks rather dramatic – a bright warm yellow spot in the foreground to highlight it and a light-blue overtone in the background.

The angel-warrior's sword has a glowing trail to give the necessary dynamics to the stroke. To the background I added sparks, highlights and some rays of light which are struggling through

those dense clouds. And after adding these final effects to the composition, I had finished the image. Here it is in its final version (Fig.09).

OLEG MATSOKIN

For more from this artist visit

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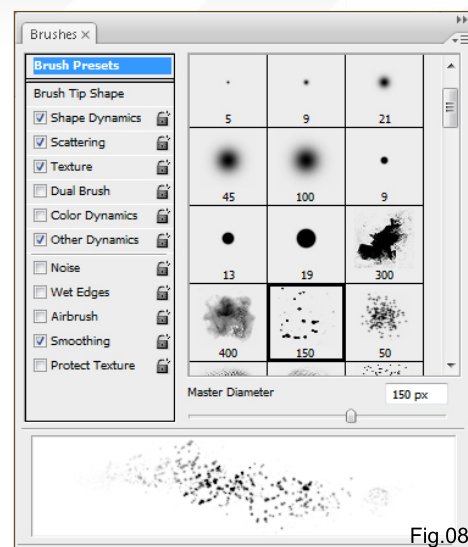


Fig.08



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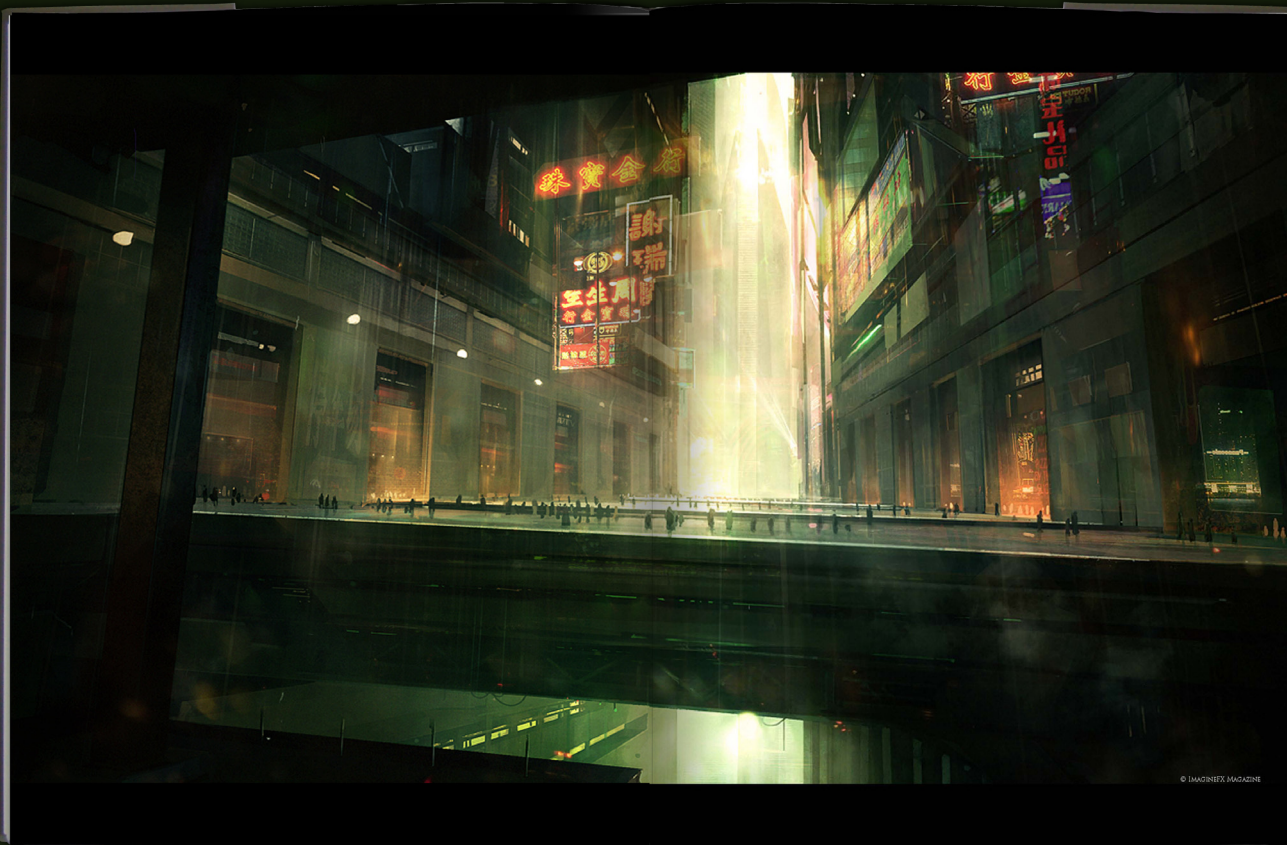
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This month we feature:

"Walkway"
Gerhard Mozsi





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The following shots of the "Walkway" book pages are featured here in full-resolution and can be read by zooming in...

WALKWAY BY GERHARD MOZSI

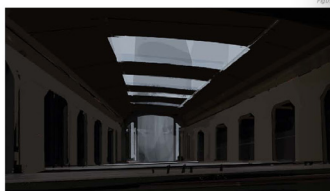
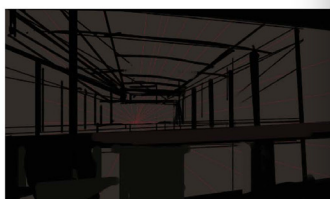
SOFTWARE USED: Photoshop CS3



THE START

The steps detailed here will explain the process of how I look at an initial concept, based on a loose brief provided by ImagineFX magazine for their "Workshops", through to the final image that you see. For this piece, I was inspired by the mood of the film *Blade Runner* – a key starting point for any project is to get inspired and excited by the brief and your subject matter. I believe this is crucial actually, as it's this excitement that will motivate and push you through the darkest times of the project, when perhaps your image isn't quite working. After watching the *Blade Runner* movie and checking out some other artwork and photograph reference books for inspiration, I was ready to get started.

I had an image of a terminal or station in mind, a structure with an exposed roof revealing a tired, run-down city. I was thinking of a dark and moody setting, but with a sense of something grand, and so with the concept in mind I opened up Photoshop and created a new file. My approach for this image was to start by establishing a grid, using the Line tool, to create the perspective (Fig.01). Working with basic shapes first and foremost, I aimed to get them all down right at this stage, as doing so generally makes the detail easier to fill in. Getting them wrong will lead to a much harder job (as I actually discovered). So with the composition sorted, I added and

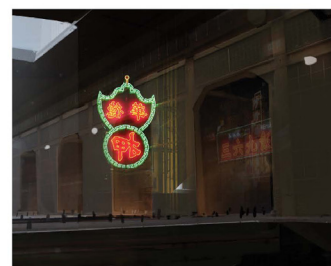


refined more detailed shapes, keeping the palette simple to avoid any confusion and to allow me to focus on my values.

At this stage I was feeling happy to start refining the image, which I generally do in passes, starting by ensuring my values were sitting right and then developing the palette. This whole process is a layered approach; everything sits in its own layer, which in turn sits in its own group. This becomes of benefit if and when you have to make changes – it makes it all quite easy (on the downside, however, your file size does get quite large when working this way). With this process, it's very important to name your groups and layers, as it can get very confusing very quickly (Fig.02).

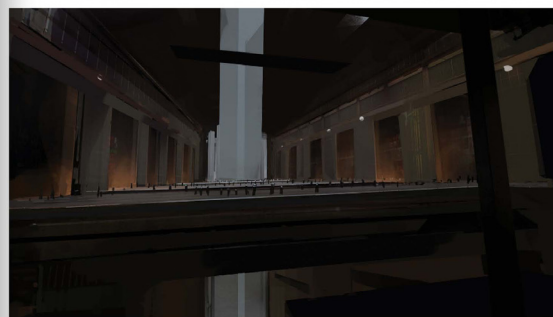
Things were going well here so I completed the day's session, went home and slept, thinking I'd resolved the composition's core elements. However, when I returned to the image the following day, I realized it wasn't working. To rescue the image I tried adding more color, more detail ... but it still looked wrong. I realized that a complete compositional restructure was necessary, but I wanted to try a few tricks first to try and salvage the piece. So I added some photographic textures, some more dramatic lighting, more detail ... to no avail. This was one of those dark moments I mentioned earlier: the picture just wasn't working (Fig.03a–b). I left the computer and forgot about it for a short while. Even when working on a deadline, a break for around five or ten minutes can really help to free the mind of any preconceived ideas about the image.

I returned to work on the image with a serious caffeine rush, accepting that I was going to have to change the composition. As it turned out, it wasn't too much hassle after all, and once the change had been made I felt invigorated and ready to get back to work. The solution was to simplify the composition; changing it to a big cross, adding a foreground element, but keeping the basic lighting and color scheme. I also got rid of my photographic textures, which added greater depth and drama to the image. I was happy that the revised image was now looking much better than before the compositional changes (Fig.04).



Having elements play off one another is called a "counterpoint", which is crucial for adding drama and atmosphere to images. Playing with offsetting the horizontal against the vertical, cool colors with warm colors, saturated colors with unsaturated colors, soft edges with hard edges, and so on, I was able to bring interest to the image through the elements. It's all about contrast!

At this stage I could see how the image was going to develop, so I continued building up the detail, experimenting with more dramatic lighting and color (Fig.05). I find the easiest way to do this is to create a Soft Light layer and paint in the light and color, not



being shy and really pushing it! I generally aim to ruin the image with harsh color and light, and then work my way back by lowering the opacity – you can explore many options this way!

When detailing images, I generally use photos. There are no hard or fast rules for using photos in images, except that they are best used with subtlety. When used overtly, they can look really horrible! I've found the best layer modes to use when manipulating photos are Screen, Multiply, Soft Light and Overlay, all of which should be combined with a lower layer opacity for subtlety. Use Layer Masks rather than erasing – it can be a real annoyance having to drag the photo back into your file! I would also advise that texture strength is best controlled through the layer's opacity, as this gives you more control when it comes to breaking later on.

When you take photos into your images, you need to paint them in so they sit well, color picking and painting over them to integrate them with the rest of your image, blending edges and tweaking along the way. The best way to check for any 'matte lines' in your image is to create a Levels Adjustment layer and lighten the whole image – any odd matte lines should become obvious as you do this.

I find that when I think I'm coming close to finishing an image, I suddenly discover that I'm only half way there, and with this image it was no different. Painting the detail takes time, it requires patience and a passion for doing it (I personally enjoy listening to music when I'm painting in the details of an image). With the palette and lighting established, it was relatively straightforward to paint detail



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into the image, color picking from the painting. I chose to work around the image evenly, gradually and consistently building up detail (Fig.06a – b).

THE END

To achieve more intense contrast in the image, I held off on adding the highlights for as long as possible and darkened my shadows instead. This method worked well here because of all the bright neon signs. My final pass

was done with Adjustment Layers, creating a set with Color Balance, Levels and Photo Filter, experimenting with them and pushing them to their limits. The idea was simply to play with the Adjustment Layers until I achieved the level of drama and intensity I was seeking (Fig.07). This technique is particularly helpful if you've used lots of photos, as it helps to unify the image (the Photo Filter Adjustment Layer is good for this).

The image was set aside overnight and I went over it again the next day. A fresh set of eyes can really help you to reevaluate your image. Finally, show your work to as many people as you can – their opinions will be helpful!

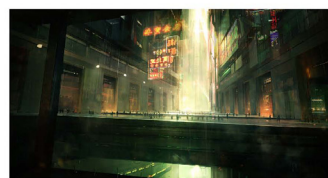


Fig.07

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CONTACT INFORMATION

<http://www.3dtotal.com>

<http://www.3dcreativemag.com>

<http://www.2dartistmag.com>

Editor & Content Manager > Lynette Clee

lynette@3dtotal.com

Lead Designer > Chris Perrins

chrisp@3dtotal.com

Marketing > Jo Hargreaves

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